

20 GCSE STORIES

TO GUARANTEE YOU TOP GRADES



DOMINIC SALLES

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Dominic Salles still lives in Swindon, with his workaholic wife Deirdre. His jiu-jitsu-loving ex-engineer son, Harry, has moved to Shoreditch and lives on the site of Shakespeare's first theatre. Destiny. For those of you who remember Bob, he is now an ex-dog. It's curtains for Bob and The Curtain for Harry.

His daughter Jess is moving to New Zealand where the surf is better, and the rugby is better than Wales. He spent three months in Andorra this year, learning to snowboard. He is not as cool as he thinks, but he will spend part of the summer in New Zealand snowboarding on a volcano.

His sister Jacey is an actress, famous for her Spanish accent, on your TV screens in shows like Casualty and Cold Feet. She would be hilarious in her own YouTube channel. Tweet her to let her know.

His YouTube channel, Mr Salles Teaches English, has reached 100,000 subscribers, about which he is childishy excited. 30% of his viewers said they improved by at least 3 grades in 2022.

He drives a Toyota Prius and is getting solar panels this year to offset his enormous carbon footprint. I don't expect they will fit on the car though.

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Who Writes the Better Story?

INTRODUCTION

If you want to read 20 great short stories, this is the wrong guide.

That guide is my Guide to Awesome Story Writing.

This guide is to give you awesome plots you can adapt, any way you like, for the exam, ***without getting done for plagiarism.***

So, you get 23 plots.

Several different ways of starting or ending each story.

An attempt at the story by ChatGPT or Gemini, or both. These AI versions should give you lots of ideas about how to structure your story. They can get you to a grade 7. But they are also full of too much vocabulary and cliché.

And you get part of the story, written by me. That part is grade 9 quality and without cliché.

But, the real magic happens if you take the plot, the beginnings and endings, the ideas from AI and me, mash it all together to create something cool of your own.

If that doesn't appeal to you, DO NOT BUY THIS GUIDE!

WHAT MAKES A GREAT STORY?

Ok, I'm just going to assume that you know how to write in sentences. That's all you need to know to write the words for a short story. But that isn't the secret.

Before this, I've published two books to show you what great short stories look like. The Ultimate Guide to Short Story Writing included over 20 stories, showing what excellent 500-700 stories look like, and how to write these in a number of different genres and styles.

The Ultimate Guide to Paper 1 Question 5 shows over 20 stories from students, with several at each grade. They are all based on what students can write under exam conditions. This helps you grade your own stories and understand how to improve them.

This is the secret I haven't yet taught.

How do You Structure Your Story?

This book helps you think like a writer.

In school, we tend to practise lots of language techniques: metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, and so on. We tell you to vary the length of your sentences, and have one sentence paragraphs, etc. We ask you to vary your punctuation (ooh! What, now? I see...)

But we spend too little time thinking about how to start the story so the reader is hooked.

Or how to end it so that the reader revisits what happened and sees it in a new light.

Or which perspective to tell the story from so that it is most fun to read or to make it really memorable.

So this book focuses on how to start and end your story, and how to tell it.

THE SEQUENCE OF A STORY STRUCTURE

1: Who Is the Character of Your Story?

2: What Do They Want?

3: Why Can't They Have What They Want?

4: What's at Stake if They Don't Get What They Want?

5: Who or What Helps Them Get What They Want?

6: How Do They Finally Get What They Want?

7: How Is the Character Transformed?

You will see how all 23 stories follow this structure.

THE HIDDEN STRUCTURE OF STORIES

1. **How do you choose how to start?**
2. **How do you choose how to end?**
3. **Whose point of view will you tell the story from?**

When you play around with your answer to those 3 questions, you will learn how to really enjoy story writing.

How to Find Story Ideas

Many students have started to copy parts of the descriptions in my guides and videos instead of thinking for themselves.

This presents two real problems. First, the examiners are starting to get to know my stuff, and so they recognise this as plagiarism and award a lower mark. Secondly, if you copy, I'm not showing you that writing short stories is just great fun and a skill for life.

You can copy the plots of these stories – *that is not plagiarism*.

You'll never regret writing a short story, which will stay with you for life.

But you'll never remember a description you copied, or even wrote for yourself. You'll never say, "I'm so lucky I took English language GCSE and practised all those description questions".

But I predict you will remember this book and, I hope, be grateful that you used it for English GCSE.

THIS IS HOW THE BOOK WORKS

1. Read 23 plots of 23 stories. Most of them are mostly true!
2. Find some plots you like.
3. Choose your favourite plot to practise with.
4. Pick 2 of the different ways I suggest to start the story and write them – which works best?
5. Do the same for 2 of the alternative endings I suggest – which makes the story most memorable?
6. Write the story – it will be at least grade 7. I guarantee it.
7. Give it to your teacher and ask for 5 specific changes you could make to get to grade 8 or 9, or beyond.
8. Look at 5 past papers and work out how that story could be adapted to every single question.
9. Try it again with a second story, because now you are curious to see if you can write a better story as a first draft.
- 10. Send them to me to make a video, or publish in my next book of short stories!**

1. THE CROC AND BULL STORY

Park Rangers in Kruger National Park need to sedate a bull elephant, Napoleon. They're going to put a GPS collar on him, so they can track him and improve his habitat and chances of survival. He only comes to the National park once a year, in mating season, so they must do it now. They find him with Binti, an eligible female elephant on heat, who is also pursued by a number of younger males.

They tranquilize him but it takes about half an hour to take effect. Binti is disappointed at Napoleon's decreasing effort, and starts to approach the younger elephants who are not drugged, and so the bull elephant, Napoleon, starts to chase her. She escapes across the river. But as he follows her into the middle, he suddenly becomes unconscious, slumps in the water and starts to drown. It's a crocodile infested river.

But the young ranger Rommel weighs up the risk to his life compared to losing the prize elephant. He wades in and manages to hold Napoleon's trunk above his shoulders. Each brush of fish against his legs, terrifies him as though it's the scales of a crocodile coming to attack. His shoulders burn for 20 minutes as he holds the trunk above his head, scanning the water for crocodiles. Then the giant ears flap and he knows he must run. He turns towards the shore where two crocodiles stand looking at him. Rommel freezes.

How to End the Story

1. You could end it there, and we have to imagine how he might survive.
2. Or the bull elephant could grab him with his trunk and throw him over his back, landing in the river behind, miraculously on the opposite side to the crocodiles.
3. Or the bull elephant could deliberately choose to save him, and place him on his back.

Where to Start the Story

1. In media res, shooting the tranquiliser into the elephant.
2. As a chase, following the elephant once he has been shot, while the elephant is still pursuing the mate.
3. In the water, with Rommel wondering how the hell he ended up in a crocodile infested river holding up the trunk of an enormous and dangerous bull elephant in mating season. The story is told in flashback.

EXAMPLE STORY

OPENINGS

1. In Media Res

Rommel peered through the sight, the X shape cross hairs caressing Napoleon's neck. He squinted, ignoring the heat. Patience. Breathe. Let the stillness come. Now, it had to be now. But as his trigger finger squeezed, Rommel jerked forward, driven by primal desire.

The dart sank into Napoleon's neck, just inches shy of the vein. The great bull elephant trumpeted, his ears flapped wildly and he strode towards Josephine, the latest female in season. No male dared challenge Napoleon in full flow, and indeed no female could resist his alpha status. But the mating ritual demanded a chase, and Josephine, as the rangers called her, would make Napoleon work for an heir. She would make him run.

Rommel stowed the rifle in the jeep. Amardi took the wheel, and they followed the two would be lovers at a cautious pace. The tranquiliser would take longer, having missed its mark, and Napoleon could flip the jeep like a steak on a barbecue.

2. Chase

Rommel sprinted for the jeep. Never, but never, cross a mating bull elephant. He'd just shot a dart into the neck of Napoleon, the most powerful Elephant in Kruger park. The intelligent, monstrous eye swivelled

to him, eighty meters away, and stared at him with rage and calculation. Fifty-fifty chance of him charging, thought Rommel, and he began signalling for Amardi to start the jeep and be prepared to flee.

Suddenly, Napoleon's trunk snaked downwind – thank God. He had caught Josephine's scent. She was in season, her musk caressing the trunk's nerve endings, inflaming then with desire and the promise of an heir. Lust trumped anger. Rommel and Amardi were safe. For now.

3. In the Water

'Sh*t, sh*t, sh*t, sh*t,' Rommel swore at himself. His shoulders burned as he struggled to hold the great trunk out of the water. If he weakened, the great bull elephant would drown. He cursed the pain and cursed his own stupidity. He had fired just too early, the dart missing the vein, and Napoleon had sprinted away. An easy tagging had turned into a nightmare.

And this wasn't the worst part. Fear taunted him. Every fish which grazed past his bare calves in the river might have been a crocodile. Two of them eyed him from the bank, their prehistoric malevolence matched only by patience. They wouldn't risk an attack on Napoleon, the only creature on God's earth large enough to inspire fear. But Napoleon would come round soon. Josephine's musk still hung in the air, and the nerve ending's in Napoleon's trunk would light up like invisible fireworks, luring the great bull elephant with a siren song of desire.

What then? Napoleon would crush him, or spear him through with the ivory stakes of his tusks. Or, a miracle might happen – Napoleon might brush him off like an ant, too small to bother with. That left the crocodiles. They had queued patiently, like diners at an all you can eat buffet. But as soon as his sleeping minder left him, Rommel would have seconds to live. They would torpedo towards him and tear his body apart as they fought for the largest portion.

The rifle!

He called for Amardi. Amardi had the rifle. But the gun held only tranquilisers, not bullets. Better than nothing. But Amardi had never fired a rifle.

Another surge of fear swept through him.

Rommel plunged his head under, the river washing away the sweat from his eyes, calming his panicked thoughts.

WHAT RULES YOU SHOULD LEARN FROM THIS

1. Writing from the point of view of a character always works.
2. Starting with a moment of crisis always hooks the reader.
3. Introduce the backstory in one or two sentences.
4. Structure the writing around the character's thoughts and feelings, not just the events.
5. The structure is more entertaining if the character thinks about possible endings.
6. When you write three alternatives, the one you most commonly like best is the third.

5 Act Summary

1. Park rangers aim to tranquilize and collar Napoleon, a bull elephant, to track and improve his habitat.
2. Napoleon chases Binti, a female in heat, across a crocodile-infested river but becomes unconscious mid-stream due to the sedative.

3. Rommel, a young ranger, risks his life to hold Napoleon's trunk above water, fearing crocodile attacks.
4. Napoleon regains consciousness and fends off a crocodile trying to attack Rommel.
5. Rommel escapes to safety, realizing the raw power and unpredictability of the wild.

Gemini

Turn this into a 700 word short story. Start with the crisis and include flashback.

Rommel's heart hammered a frantic rhythm against his ribs, a counterpoint to the gurgling water threatening to claim him and the colossal weight he held aloft. The Limpopo River, usually a haven from the scorching Kruger heat, had become a churning cauldron of terror. Sweat stung his eyes, blurring the already fading light. He'd been holding Napoleon's trunk above the water for what felt like an eternity, each second stretching into an agonizing minute.

A memory flickered, transporting him back to his childhood. Ten years old, accompanying his grandfather, a seasoned ranger, he'd stumbled upon a pride of lions feasting on a buffalo carcass. The sight, both thrilling and terrifying, had cemented his desire to become a park ranger. Now, waist-deep in the crocodile-infested river, Rommel understood the true meaning of courage – not the absence of fear, but the ability to act despite its icy grip.

Napoleon, the magnificent bull elephant, had been their target for weeks. A solitary giant, he ventured into the park only during mating season, drawing a trail of hopeful females and aggressive younger males in his wake. This year, the rangers had finally gotten an opportunity to collar him, a crucial step in studying his movements and improving his habitat.

The operation had started well. The dart, laced with the sedative, hit its mark, and they waited patiently for it to take effect. But nature, an unpredictable force, had other plans. Binti, a young and desirable female in musth, arrived on the scene, throwing their meticulously laid plans into disarray. Napoleon, initially showing interest, seemed to falter under the pressure from the younger, more energetic males vying for Binti's

attention. Disappointed, she began to move towards the younger elephants, triggering a surge of primal possessiveness in Napoleon.

In a heartbeat, the sedated giant transformed into a raging bull. Lurching forward, he chased Binti towards the river, ignoring the rangers' frantic calls. She, lighter and swifter, easily crossed the shallows, but Napoleon, blinded by desperation, plunged into the deeper water. And then, the inevitable. The powerful sedative finally took hold, and Napoleon, mid-stride, slumped unconscious in the river, his massive body starting to sink.

Panic surged through the ranger team. Losing Napoleon, their research subject, was a setback, but losing him to the crocodile-infested river was unthinkable. All eyes turned to Rommel, the youngest member, known for his calm demeanour and unexpected bursts of courage. Without hesitation, he waded into the water, the chill a stark contrast to the inferno raging within him.

Reaching Napoleon, he did the unthinkable. He grabbed the elephant's trunk, the only part above the water, and lifted it onto his shoulders. The weight was immense, threatening to pull him under. Every ripple in the water, every brush of a fish against his legs, sent shivers of fear down his spine. He strained to hold the trunk aloft, his vision blurring with exertion and tears.

Time stretched into an eternity. His shoulders burned like fire, his lungs screamed for air, but he dared not falter. Then, a movement sent a jolt of terror through him. A crocodile, its reptilian eyes glinting with predatory hunger, emerged from the murky depths, circling them with an unsettling grace.

Napoleon, however, was not entirely out of the fight. The increasing pressure on his trunk, coupled with the commotion, seemed to be stirring him from his sedated slumber. With a sudden surge of energy, he

lifted his head, trunk thrashing wildly. Rommel, caught off guard, was thrown off balance and plunged into the water.

The crocodile lunged, a flash of muscular power and razor-sharp teeth. But before it could clamp its jaws on Rommel, an ear-splitting trumpet filled the air. Napoleon, fully awake and enraged, had slammed his massive foot down on the crocodile's head, driving it back into the murky depths with a sickening crunch.

Rommel, gasping for air, scrambled back onto the muddy bank, his heart pounding in his chest. He watched in awe as Napoleon, his trunk held high, trumpeted a challenge to any other predators lurking in the water. Then, with a final snort, he turned and lumbered back towards the shore, the water parting before him like the Red Sea.

The rangers, who had witnessed the entire scene from the bank, rushed forward to help Rommel. As they pulled him to safety, they couldn't help but marvel at the unexpected turn of events. They had come to tranquilize an elephant, but instead, the elephant had saved their colleague, reminding them of the raw power and unpredictable nature of the wild. Rommel, shaken but alive, looked at Napoleon disappearing into the savanna. He knew he wouldn't forget this day, the day he stared death in the face and lived to tell the tale.

5 Writing Techniques Students Can Learn from This Story:

1. **Show, Don't Tell:** The story uses vivid descriptions and sensory details to immerse the reader in the action. Phrases like "gurgling water threatening to claim him," "sweat stung his eyes," and "the chill a stark contrast to the inferno raging within him" allow the reader to experience the emotions and physical sensations of the characters.
2. **Create Dynamic Characters:** Rommel's character is developed through both his actions and his internal monologue.

The flashback reveals his motivation to become a ranger and connects his courage to a childhood experience. This helps the reader understand his choices and connect with him on an emotional level.

3. **Build Suspense and Tension:** The story starts with Rommel in a perilous situation, immediately creating suspense. The threat of the crocodile and the urgency of holding up the elephant's trunk keep the reader engaged and wanting to know how the situation will unfold.
4. **Incorporate Unexpected Turns:** The arrival of Binti and Napoleon's sudden transformation from sedated to raging keep the reader guessing and add to the excitement of the story.
5. **Emphasize the Power of Nature:** The story portrays the wild as a force to be respected, with both its beauty and danger on display. Napoleon's power, the crocodile's predatory nature, and the unpredictable river all play crucial roles in the plot and add depth to the narrative.

ChatGPT

Rommel's heart raced as he stood waist-deep in the murky waters of the crocodile-infested river, the weight of the unconscious bull elephant's trunk heavy on his shoulders. Every ripple in the water sent a shiver down his spine, every brush against his legs felt like the cold touch of death. He knew the risks of being in these waters, knew the danger that lurked beneath the surface.

But he also knew the importance of saving Napoleon, the prized bull elephant of Kruger National Park. With each passing second, the elephant's life hung in the balance, and Rommel couldn't bear the thought of losing such a majestic creature. He had to act, had to keep Napoleon's trunk above water until help arrived.

For what felt like an eternity, Rommel stood firm, his muscles straining under the weight of the elephant's massive appendage. The burning ache in his shoulders was a small price to pay compared to the alternative. He scanned the water's surface, his eyes darting back and forth, searching for any sign of movement.

Suddenly, the giant ears of Napoleon began to flap, a sign that the tranquilizer was wearing off and the elephant would soon awaken. Rommel's heart skipped a beat as he realized he had to move quickly. With one final surge of adrenaline, he pushed himself forward, the water churning around him as he made his way towards the safety of the riverbank.

But as he neared the shore, a pair of beady eyes appeared on the water's surface, followed by the menacing snout of a crocodile. Rommel froze, his breath catching in his throat as the predator sized him up, its hunger evident in its gaze. Another crocodile joined its companion, their sleek bodies gliding effortlessly through the water towards their unsuspecting prey.

Panic threatened to consume Rommel as he stood paralyzed, the weight of Napoleon's trunk pressing down on him like a leaden weight. He knew he had to decide, and he had to make it fast. With a surge of determination, he forced himself to move, pushing through the water with all the strength he could muster.

But just as the crocodiles closed in, there was a sudden movement in the water. Napoleon, still groggy from the effects of the tranquilizer, had regained enough awareness to sense the danger. With a powerful surge of energy, he lunged forward, his massive body crashing into the water with a deafening splash.

In a frenzy of thrashing limbs and spraying water, Napoleon fought off the crocodiles, his trumpeting cries echoing through the air. Rommel watched in awe as the elephant's heroic efforts saved him from certain death, the mighty beast becoming his unexpected saviour in the face of danger.

As the crocodiles retreated, defeated by Napoleon's sheer size and strength, Rommel felt a wave of gratitude wash over him. He reached out to the elephant, his hand resting against the rough skin of Napoleon's trunk, a silent gesture of thanks for the daring rescue.

Together, man and elephant stood victorious, their bond strengthened by the harrowing ordeal they had faced together. And as they made their way back to the safety of the riverbank, Rommel knew that he would forever be indebted to the magnificent creature who had risked everything to save him.

5 Writing Techniques Students Can Learn from This Story:

1. **Create a Compelling Opening:** The story starts with the protagonist, Rommel, in a dangerous and suspenseful situation,

immediately grabbing the reader's attention and setting the stage for the action. This "in medias res" approach throws the reader right into the heart of the story.

2. **Raise the Stakes:** The story establishes the importance of saving Napoleon, raising the stakes and making the protagonist's actions more meaningful. This creates a sense of urgency and keeps the reader invested in the outcome.
3. **Build Tension and Suspense:** The constant threat of the crocodiles lurking beneath the water creates a sense of tension and suspense throughout the story. The use of vivid descriptions ("murky waters," "beady eyes," "menacing snout") further heightens the reader's anxiety.
4. **Use Internal Monologue:** The story incorporates internal monologue to reveal Rommel's thoughts and motivations. This helps the reader understand his fear, determination, and eventual gratitude, making him a more relatable and well-rounded character.
5. **Deliver a Satisfying Resolution:** The story concludes with a satisfying resolution. Napoleon's rescue of Rommel offers a sense of closure and reinforces the theme of unexpected heroism found in nature. The final image of them standing together emphasizes the strengthened bond between the man and the animal.

2. THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR TALKING

A teenager girl, Carla, is struggling to come out as gay to her divorced mother. She wants to, but is scared of the reaction. But she's also not comfortable being gay, she doesn't want everyone to know yet. She worries how people will react.

She goes Christmas shopping for clothes with her mother. They look at a blue pair of Doc Martens in the window. Carla likes them. Her mother Martina really likes them and suggests that her daughter ought to try them on. Carla refuses and comments that only a lesbian would be caught dead wearing them. Her mother laughs. As they walk down the street, they notice people's shoes, and two girls walk by holding hands, each wearing a colourful pair of Doc Martens boots. Her mother christens them, Dyke Martins. They both laugh. Carla is furious with herself and her mother, but says nothing.

It's Christmas morning, and Carla is still unsure how to come out to her mother. She's filled with regret that she didn't take the chance to say something yesterday. She comes downstairs, willing herself to find her voice.

Her mother walks in. She is wearing bright blue Doc Martin boots. 'I think we need to talk,' she says.

How to Start the Story

1. Carla's thoughts, as he goes shopping with her mother.
2. The conversation about the boots, with Carla's thoughts and worries are revealed.

How to End the Story

1. Martina has bought them to help her Carla talk about being gay
2. Martina has bought them because she is bisexual, and is using them as a way to come out to Carla – this is partly hinted at earlier with the divorce

5 Act Summary

1. Carla's Internal Conflict: A teenage girl, Carla, faces a personal struggle with her sexuality. She desires to express her true self but fears rejection and societal judgment.
2. The Symbolism of Doc Martens: During a Christmas shopping trip, Carla and her mother encounter a pair of blue Doc Martens. The boots become a symbol of both internalized stereotypes and potential acceptance.
3. A Tense Shopping Experience: The conversation surrounding the boots grows strained as Carla makes a hurtful comment about lesbians, and her mother reinforces stereotypes by labelling Doc Martens as "Dyke Martins." Carla's inner turmoil intensifies.
4. A Missed Opportunity: Carla retreats into silence, regretting her inability to confide in her mother. She carries the weight of unsaid words into Christmas morning.
5. A Mother's Unexpected Gesture: On Christmas morning, Carla's mother appears wearing the bright blue Doc Martens, signalling a willingness to engage in a crucial conversation.

This powerful act paves the way for potential understanding and acceptance.

Gemini

Write the beginning of that story

The fairy lights winked like mocking eyes from the Christmas tree in the corner. It was Christmas Eve, a time for cosy togetherness and crackling fireplaces, yet inside her, there glowed embers of fear. Carla stared at the reflection in the bauble, the distorted image shimmering like a mirage of the girl she longed to be.

Outside, the snow fell in soft whispers. Inside, the silence was suffocating, thick with her unspoken words. The annual Christmas shopping trip with her mother loomed heavy on the horizon, a potential minefield where the carefully laid camouflage of her life could be blown wide open with a single misstep.

Memories of last year's trip flickered across her mind, the way her gaze was drawn to the crimson fingernail polish, the pang of longing when her mother dismissed it as "too flashy." This year, the battlefield would be a pair of boots. Not just any boots, mind you, but the electric blue Doc Martens that pulsed with defiance and self-expression in the shop window.

As her mother called from downstairs, the knot in Carla's stomach tightened. Today, the line between who she was and who she was supposed to be felt thinner than ever. Could she walk this tightrope of family traditions and self-discovery? Could she find the courage to speak the truth, or would she crumble under the weight of unspoken wishes and societal expectations, a silent martyr sacrificed on the altar of Christmas cheer?

Outside, the frosted world awaited, and with it, the potential for a thaw, a melting away of the winter that had encased her secret self. Today, beneath the twinkling lights and the feigned joviality, Carla would take the

first tentative steps on the path of self-discovery, hoping that a brighter, truer Christmas awaited.

3 things students can learn from this story opening:

1. **Set the Scene with Atmosphere:** The opening uses vivid imagery and sensory details to create a distinct atmosphere. Phrases like "fairy lights winked," "snow fell in soft whispers," and "silence was suffocating" paint a picture of a seemingly peaceful scene that is laced with underlying tension. This technique helps draw the reader into the story and sets the stage for the emotional conflict to unfold.
2. **Introduce Conflict through Internal Dialogue:** The story effectively introduces the central conflict through Carla's internal monologue. We learn about her desire for self-expression, the contrasting expectations from her mother, and the fear of revealing her true self. This internal struggle immediately engages the reader and creates empathy for Carla's situation.
3. **Use Foreshadowing:** The opening subtly foreshadows the upcoming events and potential turning point for Carla. The reference to the Christmas shopping trip as a "minefield" and the contrasting images of the "crimson fingernail polish" and the desired "electric blue Doc Martens" hint at a potential confrontation over self-expression. This foreshadowing creates suspense and keeps the reader invested in finding out whether Carla will find the courage to speak her truth.

ChatGPT

Carla wandered through the bustling aisles. The holiday decorations twinkled above her, but the festive cheer did little to lift the weight pressing on her chest. Every step she took alongside her mother felt like a dance on a tightrope, a delicate balance between revealing her authentic self and the fear of rejection.

As they navigated through the maze of holiday shoppers, a pair of vibrant blue Doc Martens beckoned from a storefront window. They spoke to her - daring, authentic, and unapologetically herself. But as she admired them, an unintended comment slipped past her lips, a misguided attempt to shield herself from the scrutiny she anticipated.

Her mother's response, laden with stereotypes and misconceptions, stung like a slap, "Dyke Martins", she called them, echoing society's narrow views that Carla yearned to challenge but feared confronting. The tension between them thickened, each word a missed opportunity, each glance a testament to their unspoken divide.

As Christmas morning dawned, Carla braced herself for the day ahead, the unspoken words and unaddressed feelings swirling around her like a winter storm. Little did she know, the day would unveil an unexpected gesture, a beacon of hope in their journey toward understanding and acceptance.

3 Things Students Can Learn from This Story Opening:

1. **Internal Conflict as Driving Force:** The opening establishes internal conflict as the driving force of the story. We learn about Carla's struggle to balance her true self with the fear of rejection from her mother. This internal struggle immediately grabs the reader's attention and creates empathy for Carla's situation.

2. **Symbolism and Foreshadowing:** The story uses symbols and foreshadowing to enhance depth and intrigue. The "vibrant blue Doc Martens" symbolize self-expression and individuality, foreshadowing the potential conflict surrounding them. The Christmas setting and references to a winter storm subtly foreshadow the emotional obstacles Carla and her mother will face.
3. **Show, Don't Tell:** The opening employs "show, don't tell" techniques to engage the reader's senses and emotions. Instead of directly stating Carla's fear, the author uses phrases like "weight pressing on her chest" and "dance on a tightrope" to convey her internal struggle. This allows the reader to infer her feelings and become invested in the story.

Judith Jones

I told my friend Judith about this story outline. She writes short stories every week. It was an idea too good to pass up, so she went for it:

THE BLUE BOOTS

'You going to tell her then?' Sam rolls over and looks at me.

'Seems like as good a time as any,' I stare back, a wave of love washing over me. Where would I have been for the last few months without her support, her strength and her total belief in me? It had been like finding the missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle, one that I'd not even realised had been missing till a few months ago.

Grabbing my phone, I drop it into my bag, 'I'll ring you later.'

'It won't be that hard. Remember you're a strong woman, twenty six, successful with a first class honours degree.' She picks up her dressing gown, pulls it on and is beside me, 'most of all remember I love you.'

We stand nose to nose for a moment, breathing in each other's scent and I think, how hard can it be to tell your mother you're gay, always have been and have now found the person you want to spend the rest of your life with? How hard can it be?'

The train is packed; I spend the first hour wedged against a wall and someone who must have put last night's clothes straight back on. Where are all these people going at nine o'clock on a Saturday morning and why towards London like me? At Gatwick, half get off and I grab a window seat and breathe deeply, grateful the heady combination of stale booze, curry and fags is now heading across the platform dragging a large case along with it.

A spatter of rain hits the window as we reach the outskirts of the city; the city I grew up in; spent the first eighteen years of my life in until university

beckoned and I escaped to the open spaces and windy beaches of Wales. The city I returned to occasionally, then rarely, as my parents embarked on the most acrimonious of divorces. My brother and I preferring to watch from the edges, trying not to take sides, wondering how two people could cause each other that level of pain after appearing to be happily married for almost twenty five years. It is something we still don't understand.

'Mum,' I wave and jump up and down. I can see the small figure, neat in low heeled boots, jeans, smart jacket and matching hat. She likes an understated look, nothing jarring or too radical. Not quite twin set and pearls, but edging towards it. Thick auburn curls poke out from under the lime green of her beret and she waves back.

I inherited dad's height and mum's hair. Sam says it makes me quite a sight on the rugby pitch when I'm sprinting for a try.

'Natasha,' mum smiles up at me and I can see the strain of the last few months etched around her eyes, 'good to see you darling. Shame Alexander couldn't make it but he'd be awful at Christmas shopping.'

We laugh, happy in the shared joke about my brother's shopping habits. Mum and I both love to shop, our one great weakness my dad always said when the credit card bills came in.

'How are you?' I ask shouldering my bag and hugging her. People swirl around us and I wonder at the wisdom of Covent Garden this close to Christmas.

'Let's grab a coffee, found the most perfect little place, just off Neal Street, cakes look amazing,' she takes my arm, 'I'm doing okay darling. You'll love the flat, high ceilings, big windows even a tiny garden and the grandest of staircases. A very well done conversion. I don't miss the old house at all. Why your father's stayed there is beyond me,' she shrugs and changes the conversation, 'so how's life in Brighton? Are you enjoying the new job? Head of marketing, I'm so proud of you Tashy.'

We edge around a group of tourists and I take a deep breath, now is the moment. Gathering all my courage up I'm about to say, 'I've got something to tell you mum, I've met the most amazing person, she's the one,' when a courier on a scooter almost cannons into us and we're sent flying.

The moment is lost and all I say after picking her up and cursing the guy speeding away is, 'it's great mum, life's really good, tell you all about it in a bit.'

Neal Street is packed, the shoe shops lit up, every colour and style on display. I know why mum has walked this way. We both love shoes, something neither dad nor Alex have ever understood. Sadly mum's barely a size four and I'm closer in size to the boxes they're sold in.

One of my favourite shops is coming up, I slow down to look longingly at all the different boots, so many colours and designs.

Mum peers round me, 'what's caught your eye Tashy? Something that would make a good present? You or Alex?'

'Those,' I say pointing to at a beautiful pair of mid blue boots, the leather embroidered with flowers and butterflies, eighteen holes high and gorgeous.

Mum leans closer, 'don't think Alex would be impressed. Bit rainbow jumperish for him.'

'No, for me mum,' I laugh, 'they're lovely, I've got a couple of dresses with rainbows on they'd look amazing with for work.'

'Dresses with rainbows on?' mum's eyebrows have almost hit her beret and I have the distinct impression she's not impressed with the idea at all, 'they're pretty, the boots Tash, not really work wear though. Can't imagine your boss being happy with that sort of look, well not in an office. Be more for a 'Me Too' sort of march.'

'She wears Doc Marten's with twenty one holes, mum, to work. We're a very trendy company,' I say wondering how to explain that anything goes and I'm thought a bit staid not dying my hair green, 'work or play they'd be perfect.'

Mum shrugs, 'probably fine for Brighton darling, it's very liberal and progressive. Don't think granny would quite understand in Surbiton.'

She moves away, on to the next brightly lit window, 'what about the ballet pumps or the kitten heeled ones.'

I shake my head, feeling my heart metaphorically sinking towards my boots. Is mum's comment about being a bit rainbow jumperish what she really thinks?

'How did it go?' Sam is frying onions ready for the base of a curry; her spice tray is open and it smells delicious.

'Okay, found some good stuff and what not to buy mum,' I drop my bag by the fridge.

'How come,' Sam glances up, 'ah you told her? Not good?'

'No I bottled it, sort of weird her comments about a pair of boots and it wasn't like mum at all. I couldn't tell her.

'Boots?' Sam turns off the hob and takes a couple of bottles of beer from the fridge, 'start at the beginning Tash, I'm a bit confused.

So I do.

'Are you still going up for Christmas?' Sam is listening to me patiently an hour later, the curry is simmering gently and I'm washing the rice ready to cook. We've talked and decided I'm overreacting to it all, making something out of nothing probably because I'm wound up at the thought of explaining who I really am.

'Suppose so, let's hope no one buys her a rainbow jumper!' I say with a small laugh, wishing I was braver.

Mum is right her new flat is beautiful, a conversion of a Georgian town house. I'm in the lounge admiring the Christmas tree in the bay window. I can hear mum singing though not quite the words. Presents are piled up under bauble decked branches; we're waiting for Alex to arrive before we open any.

Next year Sam and I plan to have Christmas together, invite everyone to our home. This year I have to be strong enough to tell them all. Once Alex arrives, I'll do it, having him there will make it easier. I should have told him before, though knowing my brother he'll have probably guessed. Living miles apart means we don't often meet up.

'Tasha, can you give me a hand?'

I walk to the foot of the stairs and mum is coming down singing.

On her feet are the mid blue, eighteen holed boots embroidered with flowers and butterflies, under her arm is a rectangular box with a familiar logo on it.

She's singing one of her favourite songs.

'These boots are made for talking,

And that's just what they'll do.

One of these days these boots
are going to talk right up to you.'

She stops on the last step, foot extended and sings again, a shy smile on her face, 'these boots are made for talking.'

And that's just what we do.

Judith Jones November 2023

1473 words

It's a bit long for an exam! And Judith always starts with the conversation. She loves characters who talk. I'm rubbish at that.

But, it's an exam. If you get rid of all the stuff in italics, you have only 863 words. Then you just need a line which shows you have jumped forward to Christmas day, and it all works.

5 Things Students Can Learn from This Story:

1. **Develop Compelling Characters:** The story features relatable characters with depth and nuance. Natasha, the protagonist, is grappling with her identity and how to share it with her family. Her internal conflict and desire for acceptance resonate with readers.
2. **Create Dialogue that Reveals Character and Advances the Plot:** The dialogue between Natasha and Sam feels natural and reveals their close bond. It also helps move the story forward as they discuss Natasha's anxieties and plans.
3. **Use Foreshadowing and Symbolism:** The repeated references to rainbows and "being a bit rainbow jumperish" foreshadow the potential challenges Natasha might face in revealing her true self, especially to her mother. Additionally, the blue boots with flowers and butterflies become a symbol of self-expression and individuality, taking on greater significance when the mother wears them at the end.
4. **Build Emotional Tension and Release:** The story creates tension through internal conflict and the anticipation of Natasha coming out to her family. The moment of release comes when the mother reveals her acceptance, subverting expectations and creating a heart-warming and unexpected resolution.
5. **Employ "Show, Don't Tell" Techniques:** The story effectively uses sensory details and descriptions to immerse the reader

in the atmosphere and characters' emotions. Phrases like "stale booze, curry, and fags," "spatter of rain," and "the grandest of staircases" paint vivid pictures without explicitly stating the emotions they evoke.

Mr Salles Version

You probably know that I took my GCSE English Language GCSE this year (November 2023). And that I loved it. Because I ditched the cluster-bucket that is AQA and sat Edexcel 2.0.

I was not asked to write a pointless description!

I could “write an imaginative piece” in any form I liked. It just had to start with the line: “This place was like nowhere I had seen before”.

Or:

I could write about a time when I or someone I know had to be brave. This could be real or imaginary. There were also two photographs I could use if I wanted to.

Now, I had prepared two story outlines. One was the one about a park ranger saving a bull elephant from drowning: Croc and Bull. The other was about a daughter coming out to her mother, with a twist at the end.

Both fit the idea of being brave.

The elephant is unconscious in a river, so the ‘place’ was definitely unlike anywhere I had seen before. I could answer both questions with these two story outlines.

Win, win, as I had predicted going into the exam. I could make these stories fit any question.

I had thought about these two stories, and the 21 others in this guide – but I hoped I would just be able to make do with two!

My Story From the Exam

The blue Doc Marten boots were vibrant and called with an almost techno-electric Siren call.

Becky stared at them, unaware of the delight and desire reflected by her eyes and face in the shop window.

Gemma, her mother, looked first at the boots, then at her daughter, then at the boots once more. Becky's face glowed, almost with a blue reflection, like a face lit up by a computer screen in a movie, where the main character is about to press a keystroke which will change the third act.

Gemma spoke unthinkingly. "There is such a clash of styles. I think they're the gayest boots I've ever seen."

Becky turned.

Her mother's smile was genuine, warm, loving. It was amused. But the cause of her amusement troubled Becky.

It was her first Christmas home from university. Becky was thriving, but her mother was struggling with divorce.

It had been six months. Becky knew she was loved, and loved both her parents in return. She took no sides, and knew they would tell her anything, should she ask.

But she didn't ask.

She was 18, and life lay before her, a journey of self-discovery, a rite of passage, the usual clichés. But Becky didn't think in those terms. She thought in terms of tribes.

Becky's first tribe was netball. She stood a striking 5'10" tall. An athlete, coordinated in thoughts and movement, and the netball court had been her home. Yet she was too tall to be a conventional centre, and too short

to dominate the circle in defence or attack. While the rest of the team straightened their hair, she held proudly to her curls.

They bonded on court and nights out. The high-fives and buttock-slapping energised the team around a common purpose. At night, tall, athletic, make-up applied just-so, and dresses sprayed on perfect bodies, they were exotic. Unreachable. A spectacle of unmet desire.

But on court, she often struggled. Her competitive desire and muscular physique demanded contact in a non-contact sport. She had a powerful, feminine grace, but moved more quickly than her teammates.

She anticipated space, demanding the ball in front of her, but her teammates too often targeted her height, throwing it straight at her. Her own powerful pass wanted girls to run onto it, a yard or two ahead of their own special cues.

She never quite fit in. She played for an elite team, but was always at the mercy of judgement. Your face fit, until it didn't.

For Becky, curly haired, mixed race, and too tall for centre, too muscular to be stereotypically attractive, the feminine conventions of the game began to chafe and restrict her.

She'd gone to Bath, because it had an elite netball program, as well as a degree path that all but guaranteed success in career and life.

She turned away from these thoughts now, and smiled back at Gemma. Arm in arm, mother and daughter walked on, more window shopping and Christmas buying ahead.

"Oh, look," exclaimed Gemma, as a couple of girls in their 20s, walked towards them, holding hands. They strode confidently, proud, happy in each other's company. A world of their own. They both wore Doc Martens.

They both laughed. But still, Becky felt uneasy. Was her mother delighting in what she saw, or was there a hint of mockery?

Becky's thoughts turned again to her tribe. It had happened so unexpectedly.

The netballers had formed cliques. She was better than the first team centre, but she wasn't blonde, and she wasn't established. It would take months to prove her worth, build the relationships, negotiate her way in with positivity and sisterly support.

Talent should count. Performance matters. "We are athletes," she had said to herself, and turned away.

In freshers' week, she'd been accosted by the rugby team. Three of them had taken one look at her height, balance and wide shoulders and literally pursued her down the corridor.

They were all smiles. They joked. They barged each other, and laughed some more. They wouldn't take no for an answer.

And so Becky had relented. She went to training and relished the change. On court, she had looked every inch the star in her lycra dress, the sweep of her athletic legs hypnotic to watch from the stands. Here, her top clung to her unattractively. Her shorts were instruments of movement, not fashion.

And she loved to tackle. God, the joy of lining someone up and legally chopping them to the ground. It released emotions she didn't know she had. The excitement of space, a pitch to be free in, unconstrained by the zones of a netball court.

The pre-match mosh pit of the changing room, Eminem blasting out "lose yourself", the girls singing at the top of their voices, celebratory, psyched, ready.

She had found herself.

And of course, that had meant her desires too. It meant Vicky. It meant the first explosive kiss, and then the luxury of passion.

Her body had reacted unexpectedly. She had had two boyfriends and sex, which was, she reflected like a shower. Brief, invigorating, a great start to the day. But with Vicky sex was a bath, metaphorically warm, soothing, a transport away from thought, a luxury, candle-scented; steam which reached every pore. A bath was the highlight of the day in the way a shower never was.

Gemma interrupted her reverie.

“Look, you’d look fantastic in those boots. Let me buy them.”

But Becky was still unsure. Should she come out now, just before Christmas? No, better to wait till after the family festivities. For the calm after the tsunami of food and fellowship.

And so it was that Christmas morning arrived. Becky sat at the kitchen table, as her mother walked and sang towards her.

“These boots are made for talking,” she sang.

On her feet, she wore electric-blue Doc Martens.

Not in Becky’s size.

Her mother had bought them for herself.

Their eyes locked in recognition and surprise.

997 words

Ok, I just enjoyed myself. I’ve been a netball and a rugby coach, so I introduced a lot of that into my story.

You could write the same story without any of the sport, if you wanted. Becky’s tribe might play Quidditch, or write poetry, or be folk singers - whatever takes your fancy.

This would also help you make the story much shorter.

The shower and bath as a metaphor for sex? Yep, you could get rid of that too. I kept it in partly to test the exam - would I be rewarded for good writing? It was also a way of describing something entirely through metaphor and simile. This should always work as an approach generally.

5 Things Students Can Learn from This Story:

1. **Use Character Development to Drive Plot:** The story progresses through Becky's internal conflict surrounding her self-discovery and sexuality. The blue Doc Martens become a symbol of this struggle, highlighting her desire to express herself authentically while navigating societal expectations and her own evolving identity.
2. **Show, Don't Tell:** The story uses vivid descriptions and actions to reveal characters' emotions and motivations. Phrases like "tall, athletic, make-up applied just-so, and dresses sprayed on perfect bodies" paint a picture of the netball team's image, while descriptions of Becky's powerful movements and longing glances showcase her struggle to fit in.
3. **Explore Themes Through Symbolism:** The blue Doc Martens boots symbolize self-expression and individuality. They represent Becky's desire to break free from societal norms and embrace her true self, but also the potential challenges she might face in doing so.
4. **Create Emotional Depth with Character Relationships:** The dynamics between Becky and her mother add depth to the story. While their love is evident, the unspoken communication and Becky's hesitation to reveal her true self create a sense of tension and highlight the complexities of family relationships.

5. **Deliver an Unexpected and Uplifting Resolution:** The story concludes with a surprising twist. The mother's unexpected act of wearing the blue boots offers acceptance and understanding, subverting expectations and leaving the reader with a sense of hope and positive change.

My Marking and Feedback

The blue Doc Marten boots were vibrant and called with an almost techno-electric Siren call.

Becky stared at them, unaware of the delight and desire reflected by her eyes and face in the shop window.

Gemma, her mother, looked first at the boots, then at her daughter, then at the boots once more. Becky's face glowed, almost with a blue reflection, like a face lit up by a computer screen in a movie, where the main character is about to press a keystroke which will change the third act.

This is a strong beginning. We know who, what, where. We can guess at when - techno-electric suggests possibly present day.

It is always great to start off with imagery - here I've gone with the metaphor of the boots calling like a mythical Siren.

For readers who know their Greek myths, the Sirens called their listeners to their destruction - their boats were dashed against the rocks. This element of danger fits very well with Becky's emotions.

If my reader is also a fan of films, they will also know that film scripts are written in a 3 act structure, and the third act obviously is going to involve the resolution. This lets the reader know that the boots are going to be part of the resolution to this story.

Even if the reader doesn't know this, the blue glow from a computer screen is a common enough motif in film and television, so the simile will work.

These images mean I've already wowed the examiner with "with sustained crafting of linguistic devices." (This is from the AQA criteria, but I know that any exam board will value the same skills, regardless of their wording).

Gemma spoke unthinkingly. "There is such a clash of styles. I think they're the gayest boots I've ever seen."

Becky turned.

Her mother's smile was genuine, warm, loving. It was amused. But the cause of her amusement troubled Becky.

I chose this bisexual plotline because it was a theme of my upbringing. My mum partly wrote her autobiography in longhand, and I plan to type it up and add to it this summer.

She died 10 years ago, and never came out, as Gemma will at the end of this story.

Notice how the drama here is entirely through contrast. It is a window into Becky's thoughts, as she tries to understand her mother's meaning.

This always works. Contrast is your number one friend when you are writing.

I could have turned this into a proper confrontation - Becky confronting Gemma about possibly being homophobic. But drama doesn't depend on being dramatic. Contrast will do the job for you every time.

It was her first Christmas home from university. Becky was thriving, but her mother was struggling with divorce.

It had been six months. Becky knew she was loved, and loved both her parents in return. She took no sides, and knew they would tell her anything, should she ask.

But she didn't ask.

One of the advantages of having a story in mind is that you have ending in mind.

This means it is really easy to Hoover up marks for having an interesting structure. The trick is to plant information which is going to be highly relevant later on. The details of Gemma's divorce are not explained here, but at the end we will be able to guess at some of them!

It is also important to have enough back story so that your readers understand the significance of what is happening in the present. Using flashback in this way is another easy way to Hoover up those marks for structure - but, it also helps your reader better understand the story:

“Varied and inventive use of structural features”.

She was 18, and life lay before her, a journey of self-discovery, a rite of passage, the usual clichés. But Becky didn't think in those terms. She thought in terms of tribes.

Becky's first tribe was netball. She stood a striking 5'10" tall. An athlete, coordinated in thoughts and movement, and the netball court had been her home. Yet she was too tall to be a conventional centre, and too short to dominate the circle in defence or attack. While the rest of the team straightened their hair, she held proudly to her curls.

They bonded on court and nights out. The high-fives and buttock-slapping energised the team around a common purpose. At night, tall, athletic, make-up applied just-so, and dresses sprayed on perfect bodies, they were exotic. Unreachable. A spectacle of unmet desire.

But on court, she often struggled. Her competitive desire and muscular physique demanded contact in a non-contact sport. She had a powerful, feminine grace, but moved more quickly than her teammates.

She anticipated space, demanding the ball in front of her, but her teammates too often targeted her height, throwing it straight at her. Her own powerful pass wanted girls to run onto it, a yard or two ahead of their own special cues.

She never quite fit in. She played for an elite team, but was always at the mercy of judgement. Your face fit, until it didn't.

There are 5 paragraphs before these final two lines. Those 5 could easily be reduced to a couple of sentences, showing how Becky never quite felt at

home in her netball team, how the team vibe was too much about appearance and fashion, and being stereotypically feminine.

For Becky, curly haired, mixed race, and too tall for centre, too muscular to be stereotypically attractive, the feminine conventions of the game began to chafe and restrict her.

She'd gone to Bath, because it had an elite netball program, as well as a degree path that all but guaranteed success in career and life.

When you describe your character, there has to be a reason for it. The details you choose have to matter to your story.

I hope you can see how these details make her an 80% fit with the other girls on her team, in her tribe. But she does not fit in 100%, at least in her own mind.

One of the reasons to write is to try on other ways of thinking. This is also one of the great pleasures of reading: you get to try out other lives.

So I have no worries about trying to imagine what it is like to be female, or bisexual, or mixed race when I have zero experience of any of these.

That said, I have used a lot of what I do know - netball, the top sporting universities, which will add plausible details which disguise the stuff I am just guessing at.

She turned away from these thoughts now, and smiled back at Gemma. Arm in arm, mother and daughter walked on, more window shopping and Christmas buying ahead.

"Oh, look," exclaimed Gemma, as a couple of girls in their 20s, walked towards them, holding hands. They strode confidently, proud, happy in each other's company. A world of their own. They both wore Doc Martens.

They both laughed. But still, Becky felt uneasy. Was her mother delighting in what she saw, or was there a hint of mockery?

Another easy way to play with contrast and to hoover up structure marks is to think in terms of motifs. Motifs are images which keep getting repeated in your story.

Here, it is the DM boots. (Oh, I wish I had thought of that in the exam DM - Direct Message - the boots are sending out a DM at the end! Never mind, you can steal that).

Another motif is Gemma's comments - we have to work out whether they are celebratory or homophobic each time.

Becky's thoughts turned again to her tribe. It had happened so unexpectedly.

The netballers had formed cliques. She was better than the first team centre, but she wasn't blonde, and she wasn't established. It would take months to prove her worth, build the relationships, negotiate her way in with positivity and sisterly support.

Talent should count. Performance matters. "We are athletes," she had said to herself, and turned away.

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They were all smiles. They joked. They barged each other, and laughed some more. They wouldn't take no for an answer.

And so Becky had relented. She went to training and relished the change. On court, she had looked every inch the star in her lycra dress, the sweep of her athletic legs hypnotic to watch from the stands. Here, her top clung to her unattractively. Her shorts were instruments of movement, not fashion.

And she loved to tackle. God, the joy of lining someone up and legally chopping them to the ground. It released emotions she didn't know she

had. The excitement of space, a pitch to be free in, unconstrained by the zones of a netball court.

I have time for this lengthy flashback, because I write fast.

I have never written this story before.

I haven't practised writing for nearly 2 hours in an exam in nearly 30 years - in fact I type everything if possible.

I point this out because fast handwriting is such a vital exam technique.

Anyway, just as with the flashback about netball, you could deal with the rugby in just a couple of sentences.

You'll notice again that my description is based around contrast - that provides the drama. What she had to look like as a netballer vs what she looks like as a rugby player. Also, I like this because it reverses the reader's expectations. We would expect her to much prefer the netball look. So, contrasting with the reader's expectations is also a great technique to be "inventive".

The pre-match mosh pit of the changing room, Eminem blasting out "lose yourself", the girls singing at the top of their voices, celebratory, psyched, ready.

She had found herself.

Students are trained to bring the senses into their descriptions and stories. This often feels very artificial, as it tells us sounds which we simply don't need to know.

Picking on a music track, however, doesn't just give us some sound, it gives us several reasons for it being there.

Here it also acts as a symbol of Becky's emotional state when playing rugby. And of course it gives me a wonderful contrast: lose yourself/ found herself.

And of course, that had meant her desires too. It meant Vicky. It meant the first explosive kiss, and then the luxury of passion.

Her body had reacted unexpectedly. She had had two boyfriends and sex, which was, she reflected like a shower. Brief, invigorating, a great start to the day. But with Vicky sex was a bath, metaphorically warm, soothing, a transport away from thought, a luxury, candle-scented, steam which reached every pore. A bath was the highlight of the day in the way a shower never was.

Although this is about sex, there is absolutely no sex in it. I just chose something which felt stereotypically different between men and women - showers and baths - and ran with it as a metaphor.

You could skip this sexual element entirely.

But, the idea of choosing an image which is easy to contrast is super useful. And metaphors are another great way to Hoover up marks.

Gemma interrupted her reverie.

“Look, you’d look fantastic in those boots. Let me buy them.”

But Becky was still unsure. Should she come out now, just before Christmas? No, better to wait till after the family festivities. For the calm after the tsunami of food and fellowship.

Notice how this is also built around contrast.

Did you notice the alliteration? It is always fun to see how far you can push it. My theory is that you don’t notice it till the final word - fellowship.

The sound of your alliteration has to have a point. Here, the letter F is reminiscent of fear, and also of swearing - two ideas that fit the mood Becky is in.

And so it was that Christmas morning arrived. Becky sat at the kitchen table, as her mother walked and sang towards her.

“These boots are made for talking,” she sang.

On her feet, she wore electric-blue Doc Martens.

Not in Becky’s size.

Her mother had bought them for herself.

Their eyes locked in recognition and surprise.

Ideally, every story should have a moment you need to think about. Here it is also a twist - Gemma is coming out to her daughter.

I could have just told the reader that. But showing is so much better than telling.

If I were publishing this in a book of short stories, I could probably do without the last two sentences. The reader could infer all that by finishing with the odd observation that they were not in Becky’s size.

But, exam markers are busy people, who don’t get paid much per candidate. So, my ending nudges things on a bit so that the examiner can work out exactly why the boots are significant.

You’ll also notice yet another reference to popular culture. The song is “These boots are made for walking”. The examiner might not know this - but that doesn’t matter. It is more fun for you to write this way too.

What Next?

I hope this shows you how to use these plot outlines.

Two completely different versions of the same story.

Play with the ones you like.

3. THE PROBLEM

TURKEYS OF

SCHLESWIG CATHEDRAL

Lothar is a brilliant, but penniless painter. One day, his luck changes. He meets Ernst Fey, a famous art historian and painter, who offers him a job restoring damaged paintings in a famous medieval cathedral.

But these paintings are so damaged, that when Lothar touches them with his brush, the old paint turns to dust and brushes right off the plaster. So Lothar completely repaints them and once unveiled they are treated as a masterpiece. Ernst is treated as a genius. However, the restoration is a fake, containing pictures of people Lothar loves. And eight turkeys. Turkeys were not brought to Europe until Columbus, but the paintings are supposed to be from a hundred years before Columbus was born. They are an obvious fraud. No one notices.

Ernst sacks him. Lothar remains penniless while the professor is lauded as a genius. Then the turkeys are spotted. Proof of fraud? No. The paintings appear on postcards and stamps and tourists flock to the miracle in the cathedral that proves one of their countrymen discovered America 100 years before Columbus did.

Unable to bear the injustice, Lothar finally goes to the police. They arrest him and put him on trial for slandering Ernst, a national hero. He is sent

to a mental asylum until he confesses that he made it all up out of jealousy, and that the pictures are real.

Where to Start the Story

1. Chronologically – the first crisis Lothar as a starving artist, wondering whether he should give up art, when he is suddenly hired by Ernst.
2. Start at the end – Lothar is weighing up whether to tell the truth, and stay in the asylum, or earn his freedom by lying. We find out the rest in flashback.
3. Start with a crisis – the paint brushing off the plaster, or the moment he is arrested.

How to End the Story

1. Lothar is sent to the mental asylum.
2. Lothar “confessing” that he made it all up.
3. Lothar, now released from the asylum, paints 8 giant turkeys over the walls of Ernst’s house.

5 Act Summary

1. Lothar, a talented but struggling painter, gets hired by a famous art historian to restore medieval paintings in a cathedral.
2. The paintings are too damaged, so Lothar essentially repaints them with modern images, including people he loves and some turkeys.
3. The restored paintings are a sensation, hailed as a lost masterpiece and proof that Europeans discovered America before Columbus.

4. Lothar, fired by the now-celebrated professor, tries to expose the fraud but is arrested and deemed mentally ill.
5. Forced to confess to a lie to escape the asylum, Lothar watches as the fake paintings become a national treasure, forever a testament to a fabricated historical achievement.

Gemini

The December drizzle was a cold, oily film coating the cobblestones outside my barred window with a sheen of regret. I hunched over this scrap of paper, the only canvas life offered me now. In this asylum they called a cell, the ghosts of colours danced between the lines I scratched with a stub of stolen coal.

It wasn't always paint dust clinging to my skin, a halo of failed genius. There was a time when the world tilted on the fulcrum of each brush-stroke. Paris, 1899, feverish with absinthe and ambition. I was a penniless art student. But even amidst the squalor, my canvasses vibrated with life like butterflies trapped in amber.

Then came the day fate flicked a paint-stained finger at my life. In a bistro, thick with stale smoke, a voice sliced through the din. It belonged to Professor Ernst Fey, the art world's sun king. His gaze, raked across the room, and landed on me.

I sat with my latest canvas - a defiant riot of colour, a woman with eyes like storm clouds and a smile like fireflies. Fey stopped, apparently mesmerized. And just like that, the penniless garret dweller became the chosen one, whisked away to a sun-drenched chateau in Provence, a new studio in its beautiful walls.

Little did I know the storm that would swallow me whole. Here I painted some of the most remarkable forgeries in the world.

This is an example of how not to write. Having non-examples is useful. It goes too far. There is way too much description. The easiest way to see this is to imagine opening a new book, and finding this as the first page. Would you stay for page 2?

The answer for me is no.

Rewrite that beginning so that it less literary, and so that it is no longer than 230 words.

Rain lashed against the bars of my cell window, each drop a tiny hammer clanging a symphony of regret. I hunched over a scrap of paper, coal stub scratching confessions. This was my canvas now, this asylum cell my Louvre.

It wasn't always walls and bars. Paris, 1899, was my Montmartre, a garret studio where sunlight splashed like spilled paint onto my latest masterpiece. I was a starving dreamer, but each stroke I laid down thrummed with life. Then, in a smoke-choked bistro, fate took a brush to my life.

Professor Fey, eyed me across the room. His monocle glinted, catching the light that spilled from my latest canvas - a wild-haired woman with eyes that crackled like lightning. In that instant, I went from starving to chosen, whisked away to his Provençal chateau, a new palette in my hand, a future shimmering like mirages in the heat.

The chateau held a secret, though, a Madonna in the chapel, her face a crumbling fresco, each flake a whisper of lost centuries. That's where the lies began.

3 Things Students Can Learn from This Story Opening:

1. **Setting the Scene with Mood and Imagery:** The opening uses vivid language and imagery to create a strong sense of atmosphere. The description of the rain, the cell, and the "scrap of paper" immediately creates a feeling of isolation, despair, and confinement. This contrasts sharply with the later description of the Parisian studio and chateau, highlighting the protagonist's fall from grace.
2. **Engaging the Reader Through Conflict and Mystery:** The opening introduces the story's central conflict by contrasting

the protagonist's past life as an artist with his present imprisonment. The reference to the "Madonna" and "lies" further creates a sense of mystery, leaving the reader wanting to know more about the protagonist's downfall and the secrets he hides.

3. **Using Figurative Language for Impact:** The story employs strong figurative language to enhance its imagery and emotional impact. Phrases like "canvas," "Louvre," "brush to my life," and "mirages in the heat" paint vivid pictures and add depth to the narrative.

ChatGPT

The air in my cell is thick with dampness and desperation. I scribble furiously, my truth in a world of lies.

I remember that fateful day when Ernst Fey offered me the keys to the illustrious cathedral, where time itself seemed to have etched its stories onto the walls. The faded thirteenth century murals told stories of faded passion. Paid to restore them, I recoiled when the ancient pigments crumbled like autumn leaves, their flakes floating to the tiles below.

And so I painted new murals to look like the old. Oh, how the world marvelled at my 'masterpieces'. I painted faces of people I loved — replaced the faded geese with absurd turkeys, foreign, out of place and time.

Yet, in this world of illusion and half-truths, the lines between reality and falsehood blurred. The turkeys were an error, as America had not been discovered until 1492. But they became the golden geese, laying the eggs of fame and adulation for Ernst.

My restored frescos were unveiled as a masterpiece. Postcards, even stamps, made them famous. And, of course, they made Ernst famous. No one knew my part, an anonymous hired hand. Ernst, the famous medieval professor of art was celebrated. A national hero. The cacophony of praise drowned out my silent screams of protest.

Until finally I went to the police and confessed my part in the forgery. They treated me as a lunatic, and locked me up here. I remain imprisoned not by these cold, stone walls, but by the chains of a society that values illusion over truth.

In this cell, my story finds its voice, echoing through the annals of time, a beacon for those who dare to challenge the shadows of deception. For though my brush may lie dormant, my spirit remains unbroken, a testament to the enduring power of truth amidst a world ensnared by lies.

Remember: *This is an example of how not to write. Having non-examples is useful. It goes too far. There is way too much description. The easiest way to see this is to imagine opening a new book, and finding this as the first page. Would you stay for page 2?*

The answer for me is no.

Rewrite that beginning so that it's less literary, and so that it is no longer than 230 words.

Sitting here, the cold cell walls pressing in, I'm reminded of the intricate murals I once painted. Ernst Fey had handed me the keys to a historic cathedral, its walls whispering tales of ages gone by. But as I began my restoration, the old paint flaked away like memories fading. I recreated them, adding personal touches—faces of loved ones and those out-of-place turkeys, like a puzzle missing a piece.

The world hailed these works, praising Ernst as a genius. Postcards with my paintings flooded streets, tourists pointing with admiration. But beneath the acclaim, a lie thrived. Those turkeys, historically misplaced, should've exposed the sham. Yet, they became symbols of a twisted truth, and I, the unwitting architect.

When the weight of this deception became unbearable, I sought justice. Instead, I found chains and accusations. Now, as ink meets paper in this confinement, my story unfolds—a tale of artistry, deceit, and a relentless quest for truth amidst a world content with illusion.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. **Shifting Perspective and Deepening Character:** This section starts by shifting the perspective from the first-person singular ("I") to the first-person present ("I'm reminded"). This subtle shift allows the narrator to reflect on his past actions and emotions with a sense of distance and regret, adding depth to his character.

2. **Vivid Descriptions and Internal Conflict:** The description of the "cold cell walls pressing in" and the fading murals creates a vivid contrast between the protagonist's past freedom of expression and his current confinement. This contrast reflects his internal conflict and underscores the high cost of his deception.
3. **Symbolism and Foreshadowing:** The recurring motif of the "turkeys" serves as a powerful symbol of the protagonist's lie. Their presence amidst historically accurate paintings foreshadows the consequences of his actions and the eventual exposure of the truth. Additionally, the "missing puzzle piece" metaphor foreshadows the protagonist's ongoing search for personal redemption and the unravelling of the overall mystery.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

"Jesus. Jesus F***ing Christ." Not my usual prayer.

My brush stroke turned the plaster to dust. I stared at the cathedral's walls in disbelief. Behind me, great canvass sheets stretched across the scaffolding so my restoration did not disturb the congregations and tourists below. And also to hide my part. The great Professor, Ernst Fey, had been commissioned to restore these twelfth century masterpieces which had faded over the centuries. I was just a hired hand.

But I loved him. That's not too strong a word. He found me in Baden-Baden, hawking my canvasses to the rich. You remember Germany after Versailles. You remember the horror of defeat, the shame, and of course, the hunger. Herr Fey found me, outside the casino, and he came out, glowing with luck. He turned to look at me, my suit out of fashion and rather too big, and instead of the sneers most high rollers gave me, his eyes smiled. He gazed at my canvasses, I thought in wonder, and invited me into another world.

And so here I was. No longer starving. Commissioned to paint a masterpiece. And my hopes were literally turning to dust. You can't restore a painting which isn't there.

And so I improvised. The faces of saints had lost their detail, so I restored them with the faces of my family and friends in perfect imitation of the eleventh century style. The seven birds, which were now indistinct, seemed flightless and so, with Christmas approaching, I replaced them turkeys. Composition and colour was everything. Seen from thirty meters below, the detail would be lost, but the style and form would dazzle.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. **Crafting a Compelling Hook:** The opening line, "Jesus. Jesus F***ing Christ," immediately grabs the reader's attention with

its strong language and sense of urgency. This hook sets the stage for the story's central conflict and creates a desire to know more about the narrator's situation.

2. **Building Character Through Exposition and Emotion:** The narrator introduces his background and motivations through backstory and emotional responses. We learn about his past struggles, his admiration for Professor Fey, and his current dilemma. This exposition helps us understand his actions and empathize with his predicament.
3. **Blending Description with Action:** The story seamlessly blends description and action to move the plot forward. We are presented with details about the cathedral setting, the protagonist's artistic process, and the consequences of his discovery, all within the context of his ongoing restoration effort. This creates a sense of immediacy and keeps the reader engaged.

4. ANCESTRY

Erin is an only child. Luckily the Hosseinis, an Iranian family, lived next door. They had 4 children, and together with them, she would make 5. Her childhood summers were full of adventures with the children, and many an evening the two families shared meals and drinks. She was 13 when Darius's father died, and the children became even closer.

At 18, Erin realises she has always been in love with Darius, the 18 year old boy next door. At a sixth form party, celebrating their A level results and university places, she kisses Darius and discovers he feels the same way. She tells her mother Maria who, instead of talking through her feelings, simply forbids Erin to date Darius. Erin is confused. She tries to talk to her father, Declan, but he simply looks sad, and, as always, backs up Maria no matter what.

But this feels like a forbidden love, which makes it even more exciting, and her mother's unexpected reaction makes the relationship even more attractive. Darius and Erin see each other in secret, for a few short weeks, until they go to separate universities.

They are both astonished to find their love survives. They each meet exciting new people, but none make them as happy as each other. Erin decides she must tell her parents. But before she goes home, she receives a phone call. Her father has died of a heart attack.

At the funeral, no one from her father's Irish side of the family turns up. His parents are dead. There are no brothers and sisters. She makes two

decisions at the end of that year. The first is to get pregnant. The second is to take a DNA test to see if she can trace her father's roots.

Darius is thrilled. He knows the value of a real father, having lost his so young, and he is determined to be a brilliant parent. Erin and Darius get the family together, to announce their news. Safety in numbers, thinks Erin.

They sit down at the dining room table, ready to tell the family, when Erin's phone pings. She glances at it and decides to open the message, as it is the result of her DNA test. She had expected to be part Irish. But there is no Irish DNA! Instead, half her DNA was Persian.

How to End the Story

1. She hands the phone to her mother, and they look at each other in horror.
2. Or, she looks down at her baby swelling in the womb in horror.
3. Or she reads the results out to everyone at the table.
4. Or she decides to say nothing.

Where to Start the Story

1. The first kiss – in media res.
2. The funeral, with a flashback to the memory of Darius's father's funeral.
3. The moment she and Darius discover Erin is pregnant.
4. Maria, seen through Erin's eyes, as she takes in what the DNA means.

5 Act Summary

1. Erin, an only child, enjoys close childhood friendships with the Hosseinis, an Iranian family next door.

2. At 18, Erin realizes she loves Darius, her childhood friend, and they briefly date until her mother unexpectedly forbids the relationship.
3. Separated at university, Erin and Darius maintain their love while secretly meeting.
4. Erin's father tragically dies, and after the funeral, she decides to get pregnant with Darius and trace her father's unknown heritage.
5. Just as they're prepared to announce their baby news and Erin's DNA test results, a shocking revelation about her ethnicity throws everything into uncertainty.

Gemini

Write the beginning of the story in the third person. The scene is the family dinner, with a flashback to the memory of Darius's father's funeral.

Erin clutched the chilled prongs of her fork, its tines tracing patterns on the tablecloth embroidered with forget-me-nots. Across the table, Darius squeezed her hand, his dark eyes mirroring the turmoil in her own. They were surrounded by the comforting hum of chatter and the clinking of cutlery, the Hosseini family gathered like a protective wall against the storm brewing within Erin.

The fragrant steam from the steaming dizi, a traditional Iranian stew simmering in the centre of the table, curled around them like a warm hand. It was a familiar haven, this chaotic symphony of shared plates and laughter, a stark contrast to the desolate, silent landscape of the past few months. Memories of her father's funeral flashed across Erin's mind like cold, stark lightning. The raw earth swallowing his coffin whole, the suffocating weight of unspoken words, the chilling absence of her father's Irish family – a blank canvas where generations should have been.

Declan's chair at the head of the table remained empty, a gaping hole in the tapestry of their lives. Maria, her mother, had filled the void with a stoic strength, her grief a quiet hum beneath the surface, like the low notes of a cello in a mournful symphony. And then there was the news, simmering in the air like the fragrant stew, waiting to be served. Erin was pregnant.

She glanced at Darius, his face alight with a joy that mirrored the flames flickering in the fireplace. He understood the magnitude of what she was about to do, the unspoken defiance against her mother's wishes. He,

who had lost his own father so young, knew the preciousness of family, the fierce yearning to build a new one from the ashes of loss.

Erin cleared her throat, the metallic tang of fear clinging to her tongue. "There's... something we need to tell you all." The words hung heavy in the air, each syllable laden with the weight of their secret, the uncertainty of their future. Across the table, four pairs of eyes turned to her, their expressions a kaleidoscope of love, anticipation, and a flicker of the unknown. The familiar faces, etched with years of shared laughter and tears, became suddenly distant, their judgement a looming storm cloud on the horizon.

For Darius and Erin, this wasn't just a family dinner. It was a battlefield; a tightrope walk over a chasm of unspoken truths and forbidden love. In this dining room, steeped in the aroma of spices and simmering with unspoken emotions, they were prepared to fight for their love, their future, and the secrets that bound them together like an invisible thread, waiting to be unravelled.

Yes, it's a no from me: *This is an example of how not to write. Having non-examples is useful. It goes too far. There is way too much description. The easiest way to see this is to imagine opening a new book, and finding this as the first page. Would you stay for page 2?*

The answer for me is no.

Rewrite that beginning so that it less literary, and so that it is no longer than 230 words.

Forget-me-nots embroidered on the tablecloth seemed almost ironic under the weight of Erin's silence. Her fork traced circles on the floral pattern. Across from her, Darius squeezed her hand, his dark eyes a reflection of the storm brewing inside her.

The Hosseinis buzzed around them, the warm chaos of family dinner a stark contrast to the silence of the past few months. Memories of her

father's funeral, raw and silent, flashed across her mind. Declan's chair at the head of the table stood empty, a gaping hole in their lives. Maria, her mother, wore her grief like a cloak, invisible but heavy.

And then there was the news, simmering in the air like the stew before them. Erin was pregnant. Darius's face, lit by the fire, radiated joy, a defiance mirroring the knot in Erin's stomach. He, who lost his father young, understood the need for family, the urge to build one from the ashes of loss.

"There's something we need to tell you."

Four pairs of eyes turned to her.

Erin took a deep breath, ready to fight for their future, and the truth that bound them like an invisible thread.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. **Using Details to Create Atmosphere and Emotion:** The use of specific details like "forget-me-nots embroidered on the tablecloth" and "Maria wore her grief like a cloak" creates a vivid atmosphere of family gathering and contrasting emotions. The contrast between the floral pattern and the heavy silence conveys the tension simmering beneath the surface.
2. **Character Development Through Action and Dialogue:** The story effectively reveals characters through their actions and dialogue. Erin's silence and Darius's hand squeeze showcase their unspoken connection and internal conflicts. Additionally, Maria's "invisible cloak of grief" highlights her unspoken pain, while Darius's words and "joyful face" portray his hopeful yearning for a family.
3. **Building Tension and Introducing Conflict:** The story masterfully builds tension by describing the "storm brewing

inside" Erin and the "news simmering in the air." The use of figurative language like "a gaping hole" for the missing father and "defiantly mirroring the knot in her stomach" further emphasize the emotional weight of the situation. The final line, "Erin took a deep breath, ready to fight for their future," creates a cliff-hanger, leaving the reader wanting to know more about the conflict and how Erin will navigate it.

ChatGPT

Write the beginning of the story in the third person. The scene is the family dinner, with a flashback to the memory of Darius's father's funeral.

The soft glow of the dining room chandelier cast a warm hue over the polished wooden table, its surface reflecting the solemn faces gathered around it. Erin fiddled nervously with the silverware, her fingers tracing patterns on the linen tablecloth, trying to find the right moment to shatter the calm with life-altering news. Darius sat beside her, his hand discreetly finding hers under the table, a silent gesture of solidarity.

As she felt the weight of her secret pressing down on her, Erin's mind drifted back to the day of Darius's father's funeral. The sun had hung low in the sky. Erin remembered the sombre tones of the ceremony, the whispered prayers, and the hauntingly beautiful Persian hymns that echoed through the air. It was a day that drew Erin and Darius closer, their shared grief forging an unbreakable bond between them amidst the sea of black-clad relatives and friends.

Returning to the present, Erin took a deep breath, summoning the courage to confront the present moment, knowing that the revelations she held could reshape the very fabric of the family seated around that table. Little did she know that the forthcoming confession would not be the only revelation to emerge from the shadows that evening.

Was that a no from you?

Rewrite that beginning so that it less literary, and so that it is no longer than 230 words.

Erin nervously played with her fork, stealing a glance at Darius seated beside her, his grip subtly reassuring under the table. As she prepared to share life-changing news, her thoughts darted back to the day of Darius's father's funeral. The memory was sombre, the air thick with

grief as mourners gathered, and Erin and Darius found comfort in their shared sorrow.

Shaking off the flashback, Erin steeled herself for the impending revelation. Around the table, familiar faces awaited her words, unaware of the weight of what was to come. With a deep breath, she readied herself to disclose secrets that could alter the family dynamic forever, little realizing that her own understanding of family was on the verge of being reshaped.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building suspense through character actions and internal conflict:

- **Erin's nervous behaviour:** Her fidgeting with the fork and stealing glances at Darius illustrate her anxiety about the upcoming revelation.
- **Internal monologue:** The description of Erin's thoughts ("preparing to share life-changing news") hints at the significance of what she's about to say, piquing the reader's interest.

2. Foreshadowing future developments:

- **Flashback to the funeral:** This memory foreshadows the potential for emotional impact and shared understanding between Erin and Darius, hinting at the significance of family bonds in the upcoming conflict.
- **Erin's "reshaped understanding of family":** This line subtly foreshadows a potential shift in the family dynamic or Erin's personal perspective on family, creating intrigue about the upcoming revelation.

3. Creating a sense of anticipation with effective sentence structure:

- **Short, impactful sentences:** Sentences like "With a deep breath, she readied herself to disclose secrets that could alter the family dynamic forever," use strong verbs and concise language to build anticipation and emphasize the weight of Erin's revelation.
- **Cliff-hanger ending:** The final sentence leaves the reader wanting more, eager to discover the "secrets" and their potential impact on the family dynamic.

Mr Salles: Start with the Crisis

Maria

It was just an envelope, opened casually, at a Sunday meal.

I watched my daughter Erin's face change from smile to frown, to horror.

I saw her hand fly protectively to her swelling belly, the baby strong, growing, oblivious to what was coming.

I turned to look at Darius, his blank expression proving he understood nothing. And then I noticed his eyes flit from Erin's face, to her hand, to her belly, and the wind was sucked out of me so quickly, I couldn't breathe, couldn't scream.

Erin

The first kiss, that's where it started. For me anyway. Darius, literally the boy next door. The full cliché – dark, tall, handsome, a lopsided grin permanently on his happy face. Occasional brooding, where his dark eyes seemed to hold a hidden fire. Yes, the romantic clichés, but, you know, the boy next door. We grew up together, like brother and sister.

But then came the first kiss. Sixth form leavers' ball, and we're both single, both determined to go to uni without being tied down to anyone. Darius gives me his comic smile, and bows ornately, and asks me, stupidly, to dance. His body. My body. The dance floor a metaphor for what bodies want to do. You know what it is like. But then we kiss.

It isn't what you expect. It isn't the mechanics of it I want you to know about. It is the impossible movement of the heart. My heart, without knowing it had been anywhere else, had suddenly come home. Without knowing I was only half a person, I suddenly discovered I was now whole.

Darius felt it too. Time slowed while my heart beat faster.

Of course, the next morning I had to tell mum. We were close. And Darius was just the boy next door. She would laugh at how conventional this was, and marvel at the intensity of my feelings. Maybe she had felt that kind of love herself, right? I'd never asked.

Maria

Love? It's the most dangerous force in the world.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting impactful emotional shifts through contrasting perspectives:

- The story flips between the perspectives of Maria and Erin, showcasing contrasting emotional reactions to the same event (the letter). This juxtaposition strengthens the impact of the revelation and allows the reader to understand its potential consequences from different viewpoints.

2. Using symbolism and foreshadowing:

- **Physical details:** The descriptions of Erin's hand moving to her belly and Darius's eyes flitting between her face and her stomach subtly foreshadow a potential conflict related to the pregnancy.
- **Maria's statement:** The line "Love? It's the most dangerous force in the world" acts as foreshadowing. It suggests that the love between Erin and Darius could be the source of the impending conflict and highlights the potential danger that Maria perceives in the situation.

3. Character development through internal monologue and flashbacks:

- **Erin's internal monologue:** Her thoughts about the first kiss reveal her perspective on the relationship with Darius, emphasizing their connection and the strength of her feelings. This helps the reader understand her potential motivation and emotional response to the news.
- **Maria's perspective:** The lack of information about Maria's past experiences with love is intriguing and creates a sense of mystery. This leaves the reader wondering about the source of her fear and potential objections to the relationship.

5. I LOVE YOU

A husband receives a text from his wife's phone. It says, "I'm listening to our song. I love you Robert. I can't wait to see you tonight. XXX"

His wife Julia is away for the weekend, visiting a friend, Matilda, from her university days. He and his wife don't have a song. It is a great joke between them that he has no musical taste at all. These are both clues that the text isn't meant for him. But the biggest clue is that his name is David.

He's working late, finishing an important acquisition of a company, and he's the chief legal officer. His junior, Rebecca, is working with him. They've fancied each other for ages, but vows are vows, thinks David. He's always been professional, despite her perfume, her intelligence, her smile and laughter and the way her business clothes seem designed to remind him of her figure. They've flirted with each other before, especially at after dinner drinks. But that's where they've drawn a line.

He and Rebecca go for a drink. They flirt, and the line become blurred. He can't believe his wife is having an affair. He's hurt, and tempted, and in another life, Rebecca would be perfect. They go back to her flat for the first time.

Matilda sends him a text. She has just discovered her teenage daughters have used Julia's phone to send him a prank text.

How to End the Story

1. He receives the text the next day, as he wakes in Rebecca's bed.

2. He receives the text as he enters the room, and we end, not knowing if he will go through with it.
3. He receives the text, and goes through with it anyway.

How to Start the Story

1. With the text.
2. David and Rebecca, obviously getting along as they work hard closing the documentation. We sense their mutual attraction. Then the text arrives.
3. Mid kiss in Rebecca's flat, as we revisit everything in flashback, while the two move closer to the bed, flipping between the flashback and the present, giving David multiple chances to not take the next step.

5 Act Summary

1. David receives a text from his wife's phone, indicating a romantic message meant for someone named Robert, suggesting an affair.
2. David, the chief legal officer, works late with Rebecca, his junior colleague with whom he has had mutual feelings but has maintained professionalism.
3. Over drinks, David and Rebecca's boundaries blur as they give in to their mutual attraction.
4. Conflicted, David grapples with the shock of potential infidelity by his wife while feeling tempted by his growing intimacy with Rebecca.
5. A revelation unfolds when Matilda, Julia's friend, informs David that her teenage daughters played a prank using Julia's phone to send the misleading text.

Gemini

His hands found her waist, pulling her closer, their hips a whisper apart. Rebecca's fingers danced a nervous counterpoint on his collar, drawing him in just as urgently. Then, like a dam bursting, lips crashed together. It was a kiss fuelled by weeks of unspoken anticipation.

But as tongues explored and hands pressed, a scene bled through the haze of desire. David, hunched over his laptop in his home office, the harsh glare of the screen illuminating the accusing words: "Can't wait to see you tonight, Robert. Love, Julia." His wife, Julia, cold and distant for months, suddenly a stranger shrouded in shadows of infidelity.

He pulled back, a shudder snaking through him. Rebecca's touch lingered, confused, hesitant.

"David?" she whispered.

Then, the memory slammed back – a frantic phone call, Matilda's voice tight with panic. "David, it was the girls! A stupid prank with Julia's phone. Please, you have to believe me."

Guilt, suffocating and raw, tightened its grip. He swallowed, the taste of ash coating his tongue. "I need a minute," he rasped, the words sandpaper against his throat.

Rebecca's smile faltered, replaced by a flicker of hurt. She nodded, a silent question lingering in her eyes. David turned away, heading for the balcony, the cool night air a slap against his burning cheeks. The cityscape glittered below, a million mocking diamonds reflecting the shattered shards of his evening.

He leaned against the railing, the city's hum a distant drone.

Inside, Rebecca waited, the embers of their kiss hanging heavy in the air. The music continued.

As he stared out at the glittering expanse, David measured the weight of that choice.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting Emotional Impact Through Shifting Mood and Internal Conflict:

- The passage vividly contrasts the initial passionate encounter with the sudden intrusion of a disturbing memory. This shift creates a powerful emotional response, leaving the reader feeling the characters' shock and confusion.
- David's internal conflict is further emphasized by the use of metaphors like "a dam bursting" and "shadows of infidelity" to illustrate the intensity of his emotions and the shattering of his initial desire.

2. Building Suspense and Turning the Narrative with Plot Twists:

- The unexpected revelation about Julia's text message and the following phone call from Matilda introduce a dramatic plot twist. This sudden turn of events keeps the reader engaged and guessing about the characters' next steps and the resolution of the conflict.

3. Using Cliff-hangers and Unresolved Questions to Engage the Reader:

- The story ends with a cliff-hanger, leaving several questions unanswered. The reader is left wondering about:
 - David's decision and how he will address Rebecca.
 - The true nature of Julia's message and her actions.

- The potential consequences of these events for David's relationships with both women.
- This unresolved tension creates a strong desire to continue reading and discover the answers, effectively engaging the reader in the narrative.

ChatGPT

Write the beginning of the story. Begin mid kiss in Rebecca's flat, as we revisit everything in flashback, while the two move closer to the bed, flipping between the flashback and the present, giving David multiple chances to not take the next step. Write it in the third person.

David and Rebecca stood close, their lips inches apart, caught in a moment. As they teetered on the brink of crossing a line, David's mind became a whirlpool of conflicting emotions and memories, each one flashing before him like scenes from a film.

Earlier that evening, the office ambiance was a stark contrast to the charged atmosphere of Rebecca's apartment. David, immersed in his work, felt the weight of the mysterious text from his wife's phone. Rebecca's presence, and her perfume teased his senses. Their after-work drinks had started innocently enough, yet the undercurrent of their mutual attraction simmered just below the surface.

Now back in the dimly lit apartment, Rebecca's eyes searched David's, seeking permission, validation, a sign that they were both willing.

Their previous encounters at after-dinner drinks echoed in David's mind — the lingering glances, the playful banter, the tantalizing proximity that had always stopped short of crossing the line. Vows, promises, a wife awaiting at home — these were the barriers that David had pledged to uphold, yet here, in this moment, they felt like fragile threads ready to snap.

As they neared the bed, the gravity of his actions dawned on David, a stark reminder of the irreversible path they were treading. With one final glance into Rebecca's eyes, David stood at a crossroads, the weight of his decisions hanging in the balance, and he replayed the words in his wife's text...

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building suspense and internal conflict through flashbacks and introspection:

- **Flashbacks:** The flashback to the earlier interaction at the office creates a contrast with the current situation, highlighting the shift in David's internal conflict. The mysterious text from his wife further complicates the situation and raises questions about his marital problems.
- **Internal monologue:** David's thoughts act as a window into his emotional turmoil. The use of phrases like "whirlpool of conflicting emotions" and "teetered on the brink of crossing a line" effectively convey his struggle between temptation and loyalty.

2. Creating a dynamic atmosphere through sensory details and figurative language:

- **Sensory details:** Descriptions like "office ambiance," "charged atmosphere," "dimly lit apartment," and "Rebecca's perfume" contribute to a vivid sensory experience, immersing the reader in the emotional tension of the scene.
- **Figurative language:** The use of metaphors like "teetered on the brink" and "fragile threads" adds depth and complexity to the portrayal of David's internal conflict.

3. Leaving a cliff-hanger ending to hook the reader:

- **The unseen text:** By not revealing the content of the text from David's wife, the story creates a sense of mystery and intrigue. This cliff-hanger ending leaves the reader wanting

more and eager to discover how it will influence David's decision.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

His phone should have been on silent. But a text pinged.

David shut his eyes. 8 pm, and he was still at work. The big law firms expected it. They even had rooms with beds, tucked away where the clients don't see them, so that the lawyers can work extra hours.

The work was interesting. He loved it. But late nights were no way to keep a marriage alive.

Rebecca was also no way to keep a marriage alive. Flirting during the day was harmless, a lubricating oil that made the role feel less like a cog in a machine, and more like a train speeding down the track. No, this imagery didn't help either. He tried once more to focus on the papers in front of him.

But Rebecca at night, working late, was not harmless. It wasn't her fault. She couldn't help being beautiful, and she couldn't know he loved the smell of her perfume, and her tailored clothes did not know the effect they had on him. Men don't pay much attention to eyes, he'd heard, but Rebecca's were green. It was a warning sign. We all have will power, and that's why we start the day well. But the hours chip away at it. Every time we resist, we use up a little more will power. How much was left?

That was harder as the clock ticked toward midnight. It was harder still the way Rebecca looked at him, the way they laughed easily together, the way she teased him in the way his other colleagues wouldn't dare.

He turned back to his work. Determined. Professional.

And that's when the text pinged once more. It was his wife. Perfect timing, he smiled to himself, and swiped up.

"I'm listening to our song. I love you Robert. I can't wait to see you tonight. XXX".

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Character Internal Conflict through Internal Monologue and Figurative Language:

- The passage delves into David's inner struggle through his internal monologue. Phrases like "harmless flirting," "a lubricating oil," "train speeding down the track," and "chip away at will power" showcase his justifications and anxieties about his relationship with Rebecca.
- Similes and metaphors like "cogs in a machine" and "hours chip away at will power" effectively portray the dehumanizing nature of his work and the gradual weakening of his resistance to temptation.

2. Creating an Atmosphere of Emotional Strain and Moral Complexity:

- The detailed descriptions of David's work environment, the nature of his attraction to Rebecca, and the late-night atmosphere all contribute to a sense of emotional strain and a morally ambiguous situation.
- The reader is left to grapple with David's justifications and his seemingly contradictory feelings towards his wife and Rebecca.

3. Employing Foreshadowing and Cliff-hanger Ending to Intrigue the Reader:

- The text message from his wife, signed "Robert," containing terms of endearment and expressing desire, foreshadows a potential revelation and the possibility of infidelity.

- The cliff-hanger ending with the unexpected revelation in the text and David's ambiguous smile leave the reader questioning his true feelings, intentions, and the potential consequences of the situation.

6. VOMIT AND THE VIKING

Anna loves to party, who doesn't? She's doing A levels. One Saturday, she goes to a house party. It's being given by one of the cool girls, Saskia, who is clever, beautiful and rich. But once she gets to the party, there is only one thing Anna wants more than to impress Saskia, and that is to hook up with Sven, the tall, blonde Viking type, brilliant smile, blue eyes, sculpted muscles, cool fashion sense. He doesn't go to their sixth from college. He's a friend of Saskia's from who knows where.

Anna tries everything, tossing her hair, laughing ostentatiously, making eye contact across the room, then trying to talk to him. But Sven has no chat and doesn't take any of her hints. Anna drinks more and more, and though she flirts with other boys, none of them look half as exotic as Sven. Eventually, the party ends, and they all find different spots in different rooms. Sven and a few of her friends sleep in her room. They lie next to each other, their bodies inches apart, and absolutely nothing happens. Until 5 am, that is, when Anna vomits all over her own legs and, of course, on the still sleeping Sven.

Anna, embarrassed and disgusted, flees the house. She texts Saskia to tell her how disgusting Sven was, that he had puked all over her, and then just gone back to sleep. Saskia and Anna bond in mutual disgust.

That night, she texts her best friend, Marcia, and tells her what really happened. She presses send, only to find that she has sent the text to Saskia by mistake.

Where to Start the Story

1. Write the whole thing as a text – Anna retelling everything to Marcia, then realising her mistake when she presses send.
2. Write in the third person, starting at the beginning.
3. Start at the crisis – Anna seeing Sven, flirting with him and making no progress.
4. Start with anti-climax – they both settle side by side in the bedroom, but nothing happens. The rest is told in flashback as and after she vomits.

How to End the Story

1. The realisation that the text has gone to Saskia and not Marcia.
3. We find out that Sven is telling the story – perhaps to his kids – ‘and that’s how I met your mother’.

5 Act Summary

1. Anna attends a party hosted by Saskia, hoping to impress her and hook up with a new guy, Sven.
2. Despite her attempts, Sven shows no interest in Anna.
3. The party ends with Anna spending the night next to Sven, nothing happens until she throws up on him.
4. Humiliated, Anna leaves and tells Saskia about Sven's disgusting behaviour.

5. Anna accidentally sends a text to Saskia revealing the truth about what happened.

Gemini

Write the ending of this story. Write it from the point of view of Sven who is telling the story to his own children to explain how he met their mother before they were born.

So there I was, sprawled out on Saskia's plush rug like a beached whale, dreams of epic Viking battles swirling in my head. Suddenly, the room lurched sideways, and a tidal wave of technicolour regret soaked my t-shirt. I blinked, the aftershocks of sleep clinging to my eyelids, and saw your mum, Anna, doubled over like a pretzel, spewing rainbows onto her own legs and, much to my horror, right onto my unsuspecting chest.

Now, let me tell you, I've seen things - berserkers in a frenzy, krakens rising from the depths, Odin himself on a particularly potent mead night. But nothing, and I mean nothing, prepared me for that. Shame hung in the air thicker than a London fog, and Anna, resembled a drowned kitten.

I did what any decent bloke would do - pretended to be asleep. Honestly, it was the only escape route I could see. Besides, after a night of Saskia's potent punch and questionable company, my own stomach was threatening a similar rebellion.

She fled, of course, a trail of apologies and recriminations echoing in her wake. I heard Saskia's sleepy snort from the corner, followed by a muttered, "Typical Anna." Typical Viking, I thought, suppressing a grin.

Now, most chaps in my shoes would've washed the whole debacle down with another flagon of mead and called it a night. But something about your mum, even in her technicolour disgrace, snagged my attention. Maybe it was the vulnerability in her tear-streaked eyes, or the way her fiery hair fanned out like a shield around her shame. Whatever it was, I knew I couldn't let her drown in her own mess, both literal and metaphorical.

So, with a sigh that rattled the windowpanes, I hauled myself up, grabbed a towel, and set about the unglamorous task of cleaning up. When I finished, she was still curled up, a whimpering bundle of mortification. I sat beside her, careful not to invade her space, and offered her a glass of water.

"Look," I said, my voice gruff but gentle, "accidents happen. Especially after Saskia's concoctions."

She peeked at me, a sliver of emerald green peeking through the curtain of her hair. "You weren't disgusted?"

I chuckled, a low rumble in my chest. "Disgusted? I've wrestled trolls with worse table manners."

That was the start, kids. A shared laugh in the aftermath of chaos. We talked for hours, about everything and nothing, the awkwardness melting away like frost in the morning sun. Turns out, Anna wasn't just a party girl with a penchant for projectile vomiting. She was funny, sharp as a Valkyrie's axe, and had a story that rivalled any saga I'd ever heard.

And me? Well, I wasn't just some muscle-bound pretty boy from some far-flung land. I was a dreamer, a storyteller, a bit of a mess myself sometimes. But together, we fit like two pieces of a broken shield, re-forged in the fires of that messy, unforgettable night.

The rest, as they say, is history. We courted, we bickered, we weathered storms fiercer than any North Sea gale. And eventually, you two little rascals came along, proof that even the most spectacular messes can blossom into something beautiful.

So remember, kids, when life throws you a technicolour curveball, don't run. Embrace the chaos, laugh at the absurdity, and maybe, just maybe, you'll find the love of your life puking on your chest in the middle of a stranger's living room. Now, who's up for some pancakes? They might not be Viking fare, but they're guaranteed not to induce projectile regret.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting Humour and Emotional Connection Through Unconventional Situations:

- The story uses humour to narrate an unusual and potentially embarrassing situation (being vomited on). This unexpected twist and the narrator's self-deprecating tone create an engaging and relatable voice.
- Despite the humorous situation, the narrator expresses genuine concern for Anna, showcasing his kindness and setting the stage for a deeper emotional connection.

2. Developing Characters Through Dialogue and Internal Monologue:

- The dialogue reveals aspects of the characters' personalities and potential connection. The narrator's use of metaphors and historical references ("Valkyrie's axe," "North Sea gale") hints at his interests and imagination. Anna's vulnerability and self-deprecation ("Typical Anna") provide glimpses into her character as well.
- The narrator's internal monologue further reveals his thoughts and motivations, allowing the reader to understand his decision to help Anna and his growing attraction to her.

3. Linking the Past to the Present Through Storytelling:

- The story uses the unconventional meet-cute as a framing device to share their love story with his children. This narrative technique allows him to create a personal and engaging experience for his audience.

- By connecting the messy beginnings to their present happiness, the narrator emphasizes the message of finding beauty and connection in unexpected places.

ChatGPT

Retell the story from Anna's point of view, after she has sent the text. Write it in the voice of a 21 year old valley girl. Use humour.

OMG, like, buckle up babes, 'cause Aunt Anna's about to spill the tea on how she met your daddy, okay? So, picture this: it's a Saturday night, and I'm all psyched up for Saskia's epic house party. Saskia? Total queen bee, okay? She's like, the Regina George of our school, but with better hair and, like, a trust fund.

Anyway, I roll up to this party, feeling all fierce in my new outfit, ready to strut my stuff and, like, make some moves on this super-hot Viking dude named Sven. He's, like, straight out of a romance novel - tall, blonde, with abs you could grate cheese on, you know? And let me tell ya, I am all about that Nordic charm.

So there I am, flipping my hair, giggling like a maniac, and batting my eyelashes at Sven from across the room. But does he notice? Nope. Homeboy's, like, clueless. I mean, I even tried to start a convo with him, but he's about as chatty as a brick wall. Rude, much?

So, like any self-respecting girl would do, I drown my sorrows in a sea of jungle juice and, like, flirt with every dude who crosses my path. But none of them even come close to Sven's level of hotness. It's, like, a tragedy in the making, I swear.

Fast forward to the end of the night, and we're all crashing at Saskia's place. Sven and a few others end up in my room, and I'm, like, praying for some Netflix and chill action. But nope, nada, zilch. It's like we're playing a game of human Tetris, all squished together and nothing happening.

Then, just when I think this night couldn't get any worse, my stomach decides to do a flip-flop and I hurl all over myself and - you guessed it - Sven. Talk about a Kodak moment, am I right?

So, I do what any self-respecting girl would do in that situation: I bolt out of there faster than you can say "hot mess" and text Saskia about the disaster that just went down. I mean, it's a miracle I didn't leave a trail of breadcrumbs behind me, I was outta there so fast.

But here's where it gets even juicier, babes. I accidentally send that text to Saskia instead of my BFF Marcia. Can you say epic fail? So yeah, that's the story of how I met your daddy, kiddos. A vomit-covered Viking and a valley girl walk into a party... and the rest is history, I guess.

3 things students should learn from this:

1. **Characterisation:** This story effectively uses characterisation to bring the characters to life. Through Anna's voice, readers get a clear sense of her personality - she's a confident, outgoing "valley girl" who isn't afraid to speak her mind. Sven is portrayed as the quintessential handsome but somewhat aloof love interest. By creating vivid and memorable characters, students can make their stories more engaging and relatable to readers.
2. **Conflict and Humour:** The story employs both conflict and humour to drive the plot forward. Anna's quest to impress Sven sets up the central conflict, and her misadventures at the party - culminating in the comedic vomiting incident - add humour and unexpected twists to the narrative. By incorporating conflict and humour into their own stories, students

can create compelling and entertaining narratives that keep readers hooked.

3. **Voice and Point of View:** The story's use of Anna's distinct voice and first-person point of view adds depth and authenticity to the storytelling. Anna's voice shines through in her colourful language, slang, and humorous commentary, giving readers insight into her thoughts and emotions. By experimenting with different voices and points of view, students can develop their own unique writing styles and create characters that feel genuine and relatable.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

Ok, which was worse? So, I'm 18, and totally, like, totally, totally wired and stoked, because, well obviously, I'm drunk. I've been mixing, not just the vodka, but the beer, and at some point, wine with the girls, and I'm sooo wasted, though not so wasted that I can't remember all the humiliating details.

So, yeah, I'm way too drunk to look cool, and drunk enough to feel cool. And, you know, Saskia's place is like amazing, it's like her mom got a job working for some billionaire and one day he said, hey Saskia's mom, you're so cool, I'm just going to give you my second best house, the one with the pool, and the gym and the sauna and the seven ensuites. Yeah, I don't actually know how Saskia's mum could afford this movie set of a house, but like, she is waaay cooler than my mom and Saskia, well, she's a bitch to be blunt, but she's taken bitchiness to new heights, like she be the queen of bitch-town, and well, I'm just basking in the glow of her coolness when she invites me over. I mean, to mix some metaphors, the sun has turned its gaze on me, and I'm illuminated, almost from within, just bursting with hope, and all that reflected coolness. Like, babe, I've arrived; Saskia says so.

All the cool kids are at the party, like duh, Saskia has more pull than gravity. Yes, I'm a science nerd, but nobody knows that here. In one corner stands a boy I've never seen before. He's somehow cool, but uncool. He's maybe six five, and football player wide, but he laughs in a way which isn't macho-look-at-me-you-cheerleaders-and-drool, but which feels genuine, and I can't hear what he's saying because he doesn't seem to be announcing his importance to the room but instead is like, in an actual conversation. Did I mention he was blonde and, obviously, blue eyed and handsome? Well, he was.

So, I stumbled towards him. Yeah, remember I was drunk, and so, my slinky sashay over there was less steady than I'd like. But, I was 18. What are you going to do? Make the best of it, right. So, I made my play.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Character Voice and Personality Through Language and Tone:

- The narrator's use of informal language, slang ("totally," "like"), and exaggerated expressions ("totally, like, totally wired and stoked") creates a distinct and humorous voice that reflects their age and state of intoxication.
- The internal monologue reveals the narrator's insecurities and aspirations. Their self-deprecating humour ("not so wasted that I can't remember all the humiliating details") and emphasis on coolness ("cool kids," "babe, I've arrived") showcase their desire to be accepted and fit in.

2. Creating a Setting Through Sensory Details and Figurative Language:

- Descriptions like "the pool, and the gym and the sauna and the seven ensuites" and "movie set of a house" provide vivid details about Saskia's house, establishing its extravagance and contributing to the narrator's awe.
- Figurative language like "sun has turned its gaze on me" and "illuminated, almost from within" adds humour and emphasizes the narrator's distorted perception of their coolness due to their inebriated state.

3. Setting Up Intrigue and Conflict through Foreshadowing and Character Contrasts:

- The introduction of the "blonde and...handsome" boy creates a sense of potential interest and foreshadows a potential romantic encounter for the narrator.
- The contrasting descriptions of the boy's genuine laugh and the narrator's attempt at a "slinky sashay" establish a tension between them, hinting at potential awkwardness or a clash of personalities.

7. RAKE'S PROGRESS

Amelia is fed up with her husband Tom leaving things about the house. It's never as tidy as she would like. Tom works from home while she has a 9-to-5 job, so he should make the time to keep the house tidy.

The winter nights are getting dark. The lightbulb at the back of the house goes out and Tim trips over obstacles on the path: a bucket which fills up with rainwater, a birdfeeder, a rake. As he walks back into the house from his shed, he keeps getting soaked or stumbles, or the rake smacks him in the face. He doesn't remember seeing them when he went out in the morning.

Tom resolves to fix the light. He does so, in a howling gale, and then retreats to write in his shed. Later, he hears his wife's car arrive home for the evening. He walks back to the house. But the light is off. He is furious that he hasn't fixed it properly and doesn't notice the rake. It smacks him in the face. He comes in cursing and complaining about his day and asks if his wife has turned the light off.

'Of course not.' she replies.

He hits the switch and it turns on.

'Do you know I've been smacked in the face twice with a rake today?' he asks.

'Really,' she says, 'no welcome home. How has your day been?'

But when Amelia turns away, Tom notices a huge smile spread across her face.

How to Start the Story

1. Amelia leaves in the morning, frustrated at clearing up Tom's clothes from last night, and his breakfast things for this morning.
2. Or, Tom comes downstairs and decides the washing up can wait, making his way to write in his shed.
3. Or Tom stumbles towards the light, dodging obstacles, and getting smacked in the face as he steps on the rake.
4. Or, in the middle of the storm, in media res, Tom is fixing the light. His face hurts, and we hear about his day in flashback.

How to End the Story

1. I can't think of a better way than the last line!
2. Tom sets up a camera, only to find that it is his son, or his next door neighbour.

5 Act Summary

1. Amelia is frustrated with Tom's messiness.
2. Tom stumbles in the dark due to new obstacles in the path.
3. He fixes the light but it stays off, leading to another rake incident.
4. He complains to Amelia, who denies switching the light off.
5. The story ends with a hint of something supernatural and Amelia's hidden amusement.

Gemini

Write the story in the third person. In the middle of the storm, in media res, Tom is fixing the light. His face hurts, and we hear about his day in flashback.

Rain spattered, icy and insistent, against the corrugated metal, each drop echoing the throb in his cheekbone where the damn rake had met him again. Twice. In one day.

He wrestled with the wires, fingers numb despite thick gloves, cursing the faulty bulb, the encroaching darkness, the very notion of working outdoors in a gale. His day - or at least the half he could decipher through the haze of frustration - played on a loop in his mind. The tedious drone of emails, the printer malfunctioning with an uncanny spite, the lukewarm office coffee tasting of defeat. And Amelia, of course, her passive-aggressive remarks about overflowing bins and misplaced keys echoing in the still corners of his memory.

A spark, a crackle, and the bulb flared to life, casting a frail yellow circle against the advancing night. Victory, fleeting and damp, but victory nonetheless. He retreated into the shed, pulling the tattered door shut against the storm's icy breath. Back to emails, spreadsheets, the slow torture of carving words out of the void.

Hours later, the wind had retreated, leaving a sullen silence in its wake. The engine of Amelia's car coughed in the driveway, her homecoming signal. Tom sighed, his shoulders knotting, and pulled on a weary smile. Time to face the music, the mess, the inevitable passive-aggressive jab about the light.

He stepped out, expecting the comforting glow, but the bulb stubbornly refused to cooperate. Darkness again, thick and unwelcome. Fury flickered within him, hot and prickly against the cold night. What now?

Another climb, another battle with wires, another rake encounter waiting in the shadows?

He cursed, kicking at the loose gravel path, and then - pain. Sharp, stinging, across his face. The rake. Again. He stumbled, swearing, into the house, where Amelia sat perched on the sofa, a book in her lap.

"Light's dead again," he growled, the words tumbling out like hail.

"Stupid bulb, stupid storm, stupid rake..."

Her gaze, soft and curious, travelled from his face to the door he'd just slammed shut. "No welcome home?" she asked, her voice surprisingly light.

He opened his mouth to unleash another volley of complaints, but something in her eyes stopped him. A smile, slow.

And suddenly, Tom could have sworn the shadows in the doorway shifted, took on a life of their own. Maybe it was the wind playing tricks, maybe the last gasp of the storm, but for a fleeting moment, he could have sworn he saw the rake, just out of reach, handle twitching, as if it had reached out, slapped him again, and retreated into the darkness.

He blinked, sanity asserting itself. It was just the shadows, just the wind, just another night in their messy, imperfect home. He shook his head, a ghost of a chuckle escaping his lips.

"No," he said, the rake and the shadows and Amelia's smile all fading into the normality of everyday life. "Welcome home."

But even as he spoke, a tiny sliver of doubt remained, lodged deep in his mind like a misplaced key. A feeling that the darkness held just a little more mystery, the house a little more life, than he could ever truly comprehend.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Atmosphere and Tension Through Sensory Details and Figurative Language:

- The vivid descriptions of the rain, the faulty light, and the wind (e.g., "icy and insistent," "frail yellow circle," "sullen silence") create a sense of frustration and unease, mirroring the protagonist's emotional state.
- Figurative language like "emails ... a loop," "printer malfunctioning with an uncanny spite," and "coffee tasting of defeat" adds depth and emotional weight to the mundane details of Tom's day.

2. Developing Character Through Internal Monologue and Action:

- The internal monologue reveals Tom's thoughts and frustrations, allowing the reader to understand his perspective and empathize with his weariness.
- His actions, such as cursing the wires and kicking the gravel path, showcase his anger and helplessness in the face of the repeated setbacks.

3. Using Foreshadowing and Suspense to Create a Sense of Mystery:

- The repeated encounters with the rake and the flickering light create a sense of anticipation and foreshadow the possibility of something beyond the ordinary.
- The description of the shadows shifting and the rake appearing to move introduces a subtle element of mystery and leaves the reader questioning the reality of what Tom perceives.

ChatGPT

Tom stood precariously on a ladder outside his house. With one hand gripping the ladder's rung and the other clutching a flashlight, he endeavoured to fix the malfunctioning outdoor light. Each drop of rain felt like a cold slap against his face, reminiscent of the unexpected encounter he'd had earlier with a particularly pesky rake.

The morning had started like any other, with Tom immersed in his work in his home office. The incessant beeping of his computer and the constant influx of emails provided a familiar backdrop. Yet, as the day progressed, a series of unfortunate events unfurled. On his way to the shed, he stumbled over an array of obstacles—first a bucket brimming with rainwater, then an ornate birdfeeder, and finally, the infamous rake that seemed to have a personal vendetta against him. Each encounter left him drenched, bewildered, and nursing a burgeoning headache.

Having finally managed to fix the light, Tom's thoughts drifted to his earlier misadventures. The rake's assault on his face had been unexpected, but what puzzled him more was the light's continued defiance despite his efforts.

As Tom descended the ladder, the sting of rain still fresh on his face, he cast a wary glance around the dimly lit pathway leading to his home. The evening's events played on a loop in his mind, particularly the bizarre placement of obstacles that seemed almost strategically positioned to trip him up. The rain-filled bucket, the birdfeeder, and that pesky rake—they all seemed too conveniently placed, almost as if someone had orchestrated his series of misfortunes.

Stepping into the welcoming glow of his home, Tom's eyes met Amelia's. Her expression, initially one of concern, seemed to shift subtly, revealing a hint of mischief that he hadn't noticed before. It was fleeting, gone

in an instant, but it left an indelible impression. A fleeting smile played upon her lips, not one of sympathy, but of subtle satisfaction.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Suspense and Curiosity Through Foreshadowing and Unanswered Questions:

- The repeated mention of the "pesky rake" and its "personal vendetta" against Tom foreshadows a potential element of the unusual or even the uncanny in the seemingly mundane events.
- The unexplained malfunctioning of the light, despite Tom's efforts, adds to the sense of mystery and leaves the reader wondering if there's more to the situation than meets the eye.
- The ending, with Amelia's ambiguous expression and the subtle shift in her demeanour, raises unanswered questions about her potential involvement in the events and her true feelings towards Tom. This leaves the reader curious and wanting to know more.

2. Creating a Sense of Humour Through Irony and Understatement:

- The text uses irony to highlight the humour in the mundane and frustrating events Tom encounters. Descriptions like "an array of obstacles" for a spilled bucket and "infamous rake" add a touch of humour to his misfortunes.
- Tom's internal monologue uses understatement to emphasize his exasperation. Phrases like "bewildered" and "nursing a burgeoning headache" convey his frustration without being overly dramatic.

3. Developing Character Dynamics Through Description and Dialogue:

- The descriptions of Amelia, initially concerned but then displaying a hint of mischief, hint at a complex relationship between her and Tom. This leaves the reader wanting to understand their dynamic and how it might play into the wider story.
- While there is no dialogue in this excerpt, the contrast between Amelia's initial concern and her later smile subtly suggests a potential shift in her mood or intention, prompting the reader to think about her motivations and her possible role in the events.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

It's a full blown, force 11, blow-the-foxes-off-your-henhouse gale, and I'm swaying on a step ladder, rain spattering my glasses and my eyes, snot seeping everywhere, as I curse my numb fingers, righty-tighty the lightbulb, high on the outside wall.

I had walked out this morning, in the winter dark, the outside light not working, but confident in the path I walk every day, only to put one foot in a bucket. Filled with water. Before the rain. I cursed, in several languages actually, the benefits of a private education, and then stumbled onwards. My foot caught; what was it asked one half of my brain, while the other half received the rake handle straight along my nose. The bloody rake. Had it blown here? I always lean it by my writing shed. I held my throbbing nose with my hand, tripped over the bird feeder and landed, winded, just at the end of the path.

So, a day at the computer, writing, podcasts, coffee, the usual routine. Conversations with the cat, my daily battle with the squirrel who keeps digging up my vegetable plot. The usual, hum drum, apart from the throbbing in my face.

But then, daylight disappears, and Amelia is not yet home, and rain has got pathetic fallacy written all over it. I have to fix that light, before the garden returns to its ninja state and permanently injures me.

So, that's why I'm here, balancing on a metal stepladder, holding on to a metal light fitting as the lightning starts. Perfect timing. Death trap in suburbia.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating a Vivid and Engaging Narrative Through Sensory Details and Figurative Language:

- The passage uses vivid details like "force 11, blow-the-foxes-off-your-henhouse gale," "snot seeping everywhere," and "throbbing nose" to create a strong sensory experience for the reader. This allows the reader to feel the discomfort and frustration the narrator is experiencing.
- Figurative language like "ninja state" and "pathetic fallacy" adds humour and deeper meaning to the situation. "Ninja state" describes the garden with a humorous exaggeration, while "pathetic fallacy" refers to the weather mirroring the narrator's emotions, adding depth to the narrative.

2. Developing Character Voice and Humour Through Informal Language and Tone:

- The narrator uses informal language ("righty-tighty," "bloody rake") and a conversational tone ("conversations with the cat") which creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy with the reader.
- The use of humour, like cursing in "several languages" and the image of the narrator tripping over the bird feeder, adds a light-hearted touch to the otherwise frustrating situation.

3. Building Suspense and Foreshadowing through Pacing and Description:

- The rapid pacing of the story, with the narrator recounting multiple mishaps in quick succession, keeps the reader engaged and eager to know what will happen next.

- The repeated descriptions of the garden as a "ninja state" and the mention of lightning foreshadows the potential for further trouble or danger, creating suspense for the reader.

8. A GOOD YARN

Back when Shakespeare was a boy, wool was the most precious commodity in the country. Wool farmers grew rich and the poor were sometimes tempted to steal sheep. His father John told him this story by the kitchen fire.

So the wool farmers got together and employed a hangman, who lived down in a cottage, deep in the valley. At the top of the valley was a crossroads where four wool farms met. There the four farmers built a gibbet, and there the hangman would hang any sheep rustlers.

One stormy night, the winds were wild, and the hangman was awoken by a pounding on his door. The farmers summoned him up the hill to the crossroads, where a young boy knelt sobbing on his knees. The hangman heard only the wind, and ignored the boy's cries. Stealing was stealing, and hanging was quick, if it was done well.

And so the hooded boy was lifted high on the hangman's shoulders. He held the boy's kicking legs and expertly applied the noose. The boy was dropped, and his screams were silenced, and his legs kicked and thrashed in the air, and then he was still. The hangman pulled off the boy's hood, so that his family and friends would be warned about what happens to thieves.

At that moment, the storm blew clouds away from the full moon, to reveal the face of his son. He went down to his cottage without speaking a word. There was a hook on the kitchen wall. The hangman strung him-

self up on the hook with the memory of his dead boy's face contorted in the moonlight.

For decades, no one would buy the cottage. 'But that', said John, looking up at the kitchen wall, 'is why the house was so cheap, and that is why the hook hangs there still.'

How to Start the Story

1. In media res, in the storm, with the hangman being summoned
2. In the kitchen, William sitting with John by the kitchen fire

How to End the Story

1. With the hook on which the hangman hung himself
2. With John's words
3. With the gibbet, still hanging in the wind at the crossroads

5 Act Summary

1. In Shakespeare's childhood, wool was a valuable commodity leading to sheep theft.
2. Wool farmers hired a hangman to deter theft, with a gibbet at the crossroads of their farms.
3. One stormy night, the hangman ignores a sobbing boy pleading for his life at the gibbet.
4. He hangs the boy, only to discover it's his own son under the moonlight.
5. Stricken with grief, the hangman takes his own life, and the hook used for his suicide serves as a chilling reminder of his tragedy.

Gemini

The wind howled, its icy claws gnawing at the rickety timbers of the hangman's cottage. Rain lashed against the windows, each drop a drumbeat against the skull of his unease. Inside, by the sputtering embers of a dying fire, the hangman sat hunched.

Suddenly, a pounding on the door, each blow a hammer blow against his dread. He rose, his joints groaning, and shuffled towards the sound. His hand trembled as he fumbled with the latch, revealing three cloaked figures, their faces obscured by the swirling darkness.

"Hangman," the lead figure rasped, voice hoarse, "we need your justice."

The wind snatched his words away, carrying them down the valley on its mournful sigh. The hangman squinted, trying to pierce the veil of rain and shadow. "Who are you?" he croaked, his voice dry as dust.

"Farmers," another figure growled, stepping forward. "Sheep stolen. Justice required."

The hangman's gut clenched. A storm like this, sheep stolen... it never meant good. He hesitated, the warmth of the dying fire a pale comfort against the icy grip of foreboding. "Show me," he muttered, his voice barely audible over the wind's howl.

Without a word, the figures turned, their dark shapes swallowed by the storm. The hangman followed, his weathered boots sinking into the mud, each step a reluctant pilgrimage towards the crossroads of fate.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating a Mood and Atmosphere Through Description and Figurative Language:

- The passage uses vivid descriptions like "icy claws gnawing at the rickety timbers," "drumbeat against the skull of his

unease," and "veil of rain and shadow" to create a dark, unsettling atmosphere.

- Figurative language like "hammer blow against his dread" and "crossroads of fate" adds depth and emotional weight to the scene, further emphasizing the sense of foreboding and the hangman's internal conflict.

2. Building Suspense and Tension Through Foreshadowing and Pacing:

- The description of the storm, the pounding on the door, and the hangman's unease all foreshadow the arrival of potential danger or a difficult task.
- The use of short sentences and quick pacing builds tension and keeps the reader engaged, eager to know what will happen next.

3. Developing Character Through Action and Dialogue:

- The hangman's physical actions, like his trembling hand and hesitant movements, portray his fear and internal struggle.
- His short, strained dialogue ("Who are you?", "Show me") reveals his reluctance and apprehension about the situation.

ChatGPT

The hangman's cottage cowered beneath the wrath of the tempest, its timbers groaning in protest against the relentless assault of wind and rain. Inside, the hangman sat huddled by the dwindling fire, the feeble light casting long shadows that danced like spectres across the walls.

A sudden, ominous pounding shattered the eerie calm, echoing through the cottage like a death knell. The hangman's heart quickened with dread as he rose from his chair, every creak of his aging joints a testament to the weight of his burden. With trembling hands, he shuffled towards the door, his pulse racing in time with the relentless drumming of the storm.

As he swung open the door, a trio of cloaked figures stood before him, their faces hidden in the murky depths of their hoods. The lead figure's voice pierced the air like a rusty blade, its harsh rasp sending a shiver down the hangman's spine.

"Hangman," the figure rasped, the word hanging heavy in the air, "we come seeking your justice."

The hangman's gaze flickered nervously between the cloaked figures, his breath catching in his throat. "Who are you?" he managed to choke out, his voice barely audible over the howling wind.

"We are farmers," another figure spoke up, stepping forward into the dim light of the doorway. "Our sheep have been stolen, and we seek retribution."

A chill swept through the hangman's bones at the mention of stolen livestock, a harbinger of trouble in the darkness of the storm. Despite the gnawing fear that gripped his heart, he knew he could not turn them away.

"Lead the way," he murmured, his voice barely more than a whisper, as he stepped out into the tempest, each footfall a reluctant step towards the unknown.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. **Setting the Scene:** The opening effectively sets the scene by establishing a vivid and atmospheric setting. Through descriptive language and sensory details, such as the howling wind, lashing rain, and creaking timbers, readers are immediately transported into the dark and foreboding world of the hangman's cottage. This skill is crucial for writers as it helps create a sense of place and immerses readers in the story's environment, making the narrative more engaging and compelling.
2. **Building Tension and Suspense:** The author skilfully builds tension and suspense throughout the opening by introducing elements of mystery and danger. The pounding on the door and the appearance of the cloaked figures create an immediate sense of unease and anticipation, leaving readers eager to learn more about the hangman's plight and the identity of the mysterious visitors. This skill is essential for writers as it keeps readers invested in the story and drives them to continue reading to uncover the resolution of the suspenseful situation.
3. **Character Development through Dialogue and Action:** The opening introduces the hangman as the protagonist and provides insight into his character through his actions and dialogue. Despite his apprehension, the hangman ultimately decides to confront the unknown danger, demonstrating his sense of duty and moral integrity. The dialogue between the hangman and the cloaked figures also reveals important in-

formation about their motivations and the central conflict of the story. This skill is vital for writers as it helps create well-rounded and relatable characters that readers can connect with, driving the narrative forward and enriching the overall storytelling experience.

Mr Salles: Start with a Flashback

The hangman was not born to execute the poor. He didn't grow up torturing animals. They were dispatched, without suffering – friends in the field, but food on the table.

He had a way with an axe, that's all.

A farmer, from a family of farmers, grown strong and tall on a diet of meat and bread, milk and butter, and as many vegetables as you could eat.

Farming was a hard life. Life had to be pulled from the soil. And thieves had no place in the valley. To steal from a farmer was to steal from their plate. His wife was long under the ground, under her favourite oak, sheltered from the winter snows. God welcomed her in his long home. And he knew there was room for his Hamnet and Judith, both taken by the plague two years ago. Both under the oak, side by side with Anne.

He wondered how God saw it, the taking of life. The awful pain He left behind. He thought of God often, when he oiled the noose, repaired the gallows, tested the trap door.

God's judgement was harsh. The innocent cut down, their skin blistering with black buboes. The hangman wondered how God saw it. But for himself, he practised, and honed his skill. He took the lives of sinners, but he made it quick, and as painless as possible. There was some dignity in that.

Thomas was 12 now, big for his age. A handful, to be sure, but no more than the other boys. He had something to prove, and took risks he shouldn't have, so that the other boys looked up to him, instead of branding him as the hangman's son. No one wants to be touched by death, however metaphorically.

The hangman tried to think of other things, not his loneliness, not his hopes for Tom, and not his trade. He sat with a gallon of porter, close to the fire as the storm broke itself on the top of the valley, against his roof, against the solid walls his own strong hands had built. His sheep and cows were safe, tucked in the barn. He was a good farmer, and a wise head with money. Soon they might move south, to a larger farm, more sunlit, where nobody knew his second trade.

He wondered how God saw it.

And then, just as the fire was fading, and his eyelids drooping and the gallon of porter was nearly done, the Devil himself was pounding at the great oak door.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character Depth Through Internal Monologue and Backstory:

- The hangman's internal monologue reveals his moral conflict and his attempt to reconcile his role with his personal values. His thoughts about God and his family evoke a sense of loss and introspection, adding depth to his character.
- The backstory of his life as a farmer, his family's hardships, and his wife and children's deaths provide context for his present situation and highlight the harsh realities of his world.

2. Building Suspense and Foreshadowing Through Description and Character Interactions:

- The powerful description of the storm and its contrasting image of the hangman's secure and well-built home create a

sense of unease and foreshadow the potential disruption of his peace.

- The unexpected arrival of "the Devil himself" at his door, especially after his thoughts about leaving his trade behind, creates a cliff-hanger ending and leaves the reader wondering what will happen next.

3. Exploring Themes of Morality, Loss, and Redemption Through Character Motivation and Setting:

- The story explores the theme of morality through the hangman's internal struggle with his profession, taking lives versus protecting his community.
- The loss of his wife and children and his subsequent loneliness paint a picture of emotional hardship and highlight the human cost of tragedy in this harsh world.
- The hangman's hope for a new beginning on a new farm suggests his desire for redemption and a way to escape the shadow of his profession.

9. SISTERHOOD

Jeremy Clarkson writes a hate filled article about Meghan Markle, accusing her of being a traitor and a gold digger and a manipulative woman who deserves to be paraded through the streets naked while Londoners pelt her with excrement.

This misogynistic attack leads to his daughter Emily writing an article criticising Jeremy, her father, and for a week or so before Christmas both the Clarksons are in the news.

But, Christmas is a time for family, and Emily and her other sister Katya both return home. Jeremy says nothing about the articles and is grateful when his daughters don't bring it up. They spend a brilliant Christmas morning together and then Emily and Katya suggest it will be great to dress for dinner. Jeremy sighs good naturedly and puts on his tux, and he and Lisa, his girlfriend go downstairs. They sit at the table, curious to see what his daughters have in mind. Lisa is an ex model and of course wears something stunning.

But not as stunning as Emily and Katya. They walk in stark naked, each with a full chamber pot. They place them both on the table in front of Jeremy, and tell him to think of Meghan Markle.

How to End the Story

1. With Emily's last words.
2. Jeremy sheds a tear and apologises.

3. Jeremy refuses to apologise and instead goes on a rant about Megan Markle.

How to Start the Story

1. Insults from Jeremy's article

2. The rebuttal from Emily's article

3. The crisis of Emily and Katya arriving for Christmas and Jeremy waiting for them to refer to his article.

4. Jeremy's relief as he dresses into his tuxedo, thinking back over the articles and the great Christmas morning they've all shared.

5 Act Summary

1. Jeremy Clarkson writes a derogatory article about Meghan Markle, sparking widespread controversy and leading to his daughter Emily penning a critical response against him.
2. The media is abuzz with news of the family feud between Jeremy and Emily just days before Christmas.
3. Despite the tension, Emily and her sister Katya return home to spend Christmas with Jeremy, maintaining an unspoken truce regarding the articles.
4. On Christmas morning, Jeremy, Emily, Katya, and his girlfriend Lisa enjoy a seemingly pleasant day, hinting at a harmonious celebration.
5. The festive dinner takes a shocking turn when Emily and Katya confront Jeremy with a provocative and symbolic gesture involving chamber pots, challenging him to reflect on his actions towards Meghan Markle.

Gemini

Jeremy let out a satisfied sigh as he adjusted his bowtie, his tuxedo reflecting the flickering flames of the fireplace. The morning had been surprisingly tranquil. No awkward silences, no barbed comments, just the warm glow of family Christmas. Relief washed over him – relief that Emily and Katya had come home, relief that they'd managed a seemingly harmonious morning. He almost let himself believe the articles, the controversy...everything, was fading into the past.

Then, a knock on the door shattered the fragile truce. Jeremy's face contorted as Emily and Katya stood there, both with mischievous glint in their eyes. They weren't empty-handed. Each held a vintage chamber pot, their porcelain bellies painted with scenes from his most offensive Meghan Markle columns.

"Ready for your moment of reflection, Dad?" Emily quipped, her voice deceptively light.

The blood drained from Jeremy's face. He knew then the truce was a carefully crafted smokescreen, a prelude to something far more unsettling. The festive scene of stockings and laughter seemed to warp into a surreal stage for their confrontation.

He sputtered, trying to find words, but Katya cut him off. "We brought your own personal hall of shame, Dad," she said, placing the chamber pots on the mantle with a clink. "Every pot, a vile quote. Every pot, a reminder of the hurt you caused."

The room held its breath as Jeremy stared at the grotesque tableau. It wasn't just the words on the pots, it was the sheer volume of them. He saw the extent of his vitriol, laid bare. Shame, like bile, rose in his throat.

His carefully constructed morning, his fragile hope of normality, crumbled around him. As Emily and Katya watched, their expressions unreadable, Jeremy knew this wasn't the end of the conversation. This

was just the beginning. They weren't here for empty apologies. They were here to make him face the ugliness he'd unleashed, to force him to reckon with the consequences of his actions.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Dramatic Tension and Character Conflict Through Dialogue and Action:

- The contrasting descriptions of the "warm glow of family Christmas" and the "fragile truce" set the stage for a dramatic shift in the story.
- The daughters' arrival with the "vintage chamber pots" and their "mischievous glint" immediately builds tension and foreshadows a confrontation.
- The dialogue between Jeremy and his daughters is sharp and pointed, highlighting their conflicting viewpoints and escalating the tension. Emily's light-hearted "Ready for your moment of reflection, Dad?" juxtaposes with Jeremy's sputtering inability to respond, adding to the dramatic effect.

2. Creating Impactful Imagery and Symbolism to Convey Theme:

- The "festive scene of stockings and laughter" contrasted with the "grotesque tableau" of the chamber pots creates a powerful visual image that emphasizes the shattering of the family's harmony.
- The chamber pots themselves become symbolic of Jeremy's "vile quotes" and the lasting hurt he caused, serving as a constant reminder of his actions and their consequences.

3. Exploring Themes of Family Conflict, Accountability, and Redemption Through Character Motivation:

- The daughters' actions stem from their desire to hold their father accountable for his hurtful words and actions, highlighting the complexity of family dynamics and the potential for conflict.
- The story explores the theme of redemption through the daughters' intention to make Jeremy "face the ugliness he'd unleashed" and "reckon with the consequences." While the excerpt doesn't depict actual redemption, it sets the stage for a potential journey of self-reflection and reconciliation.

ChatGPT

Jeremy Clarkson's scathing article about Meghan Markle stirred up a storm of controversy, sparking debates across the nation. His daughter Emily was appalled by her father's words, feeling deeply troubled by his misogynistic attack on the Duchess of Sussex. As a journalist herself, Emily couldn't stay silent in the face of such hateful rhetoric.

In response, Emily penned a poignant article criticizing Jeremy's views and highlighting the harmful impact of his words. Her article garnered significant attention, placing both Clarkson father and daughter in the spotlight for weeks leading up to Christmas.

Despite the tension lingering in the air, Christmas was fast approaching, and Emily and her sister Katya decided to return home to spend the holidays with their family. Jeremy remained silent about the articles, grateful when his daughters didn't bring up the controversy.

On Christmas morning, the Clarkson family gathered around the tree, exchanging gifts and laughter as they celebrated the holiday together. There was an unspoken agreement to set aside their differences for the day and focus on the joy of being together as a family.

After a delightful morning of festivities, Emily and Katya suggested dressing up for dinner, wanting to make the evening special. Jeremy chuckled good-naturedly and obliged, donning his tuxedo alongside his girlfriend, Lisa, who radiated elegance as always.

As they made their way downstairs to the dining room, Jeremy couldn't help but wonder what his daughters had planned. To his surprise, as they entered the room, he found Emily and Katya standing before him, not clothed in tuxedos or evening gowns, but stark naked, each holding a simple chamber pot.

The room fell silent as Jeremy and Lisa exchanged bewildered glances, unsure of what to make of the unexpected display. Emily and Katya

placed the chamber pots on the table in front of their father, their expressions solemn yet resolute.

"Think of Meghan Markle," Emily said softly, her voice tinged with a mix of disappointment and defiance.

Jeremy's heart sank as he realized the gravity of his daughters' message. It wasn't just about Meghan Markle; it was about the impact of his words and the responsibility he held as a public figure. In that moment, he felt a pang of regret for the hurt he had caused and the example he had set.

As they sat down to dinner, the atmosphere was sombre yet charged with the potential for healing and understanding. Jeremy knew that his relationship with his daughters had been strained by his actions, but perhaps this Christmas, they could begin to mend the rift and move forward together as a family.

3 things students can learn from this:

- 1. Character Development and Conflict Resolution:** The story effectively portrays the complex dynamics between family members, particularly the strained relationship between Jeremy Clarkson and his daughters Emily and Katya. Through their conflicting viewpoints and actions, the characters are fleshed out, and the tension between them drives the narrative forward. The resolution of this conflict, as seen during the Christmas dinner scene, demonstrates the importance of addressing issues and finding common ground for reconciliation. Students can learn how to develop multi-dimensional characters and create compelling conflicts that propel the story towards resolution.
- 2. Theme and Message:** The story tackles themes of accountability, empathy, and the consequences of one's actions. It explores the impact of hurtful words and the responsibility that

comes with being a public figure. Through Emily's poignant article and the symbolic gesture during the Christmas dinner, the story conveys a powerful message about the importance of reflecting on one's behaviour and taking steps to make amends. Students can learn how to incorporate meaningful themes into their own writing and convey messages that resonate with readers.

3. **Tension and Resolution:** The story effectively builds tension through the conflict between Jeremy and his daughters, as well as the anticipation surrounding the Christmas dinner scene. The unexpected twist of Emily and Katya's unconventional attire adds to the suspense and leads to a moment of emotional revelation and resolution. By carefully pacing the narrative and strategically revealing information, the story creates a sense of anticipation that keeps readers engaged until the satisfying conclusion. Students can learn how to manipulate tension and create compelling resolutions that leave a lasting impact on the reader.

Mr Salles Beginning

Being Emily Clarkson was not easy. When your father was famous on national TV as a polluting petrol head who made questionable jokes about foreigners and got sacked by the BBC because he punched his producer in the face over a sandwich, people tended to look at you oddly.

Emily took all that in her elegant stride. But this! This time, he'd gone too far. Asking Megan Markle to be paraded through the streets naked as a traitor to the monarchy made misogyny permissible. Violence against women was everywhere, and her father had just legitimised it in the Sunday Times. Emily, also a journalist, had given vent to her full fury in print.

A very public falling out.

And now, just two weeks later, it was Christmas. Mum, Fran to her family, would be there, and the new wife, the model, the farmer. Lovely, impossible to dislike. Mostly.

But there would also be Katya, and Katya understood. They had planned a joint outfit for their Christmas dinner. Glitter, definitely. And obviously Santa hats. They also planned matching tattoos, #Me2.

Katya had carried the porcelain, only the best Wedgewood, in royal blue. Only the best for dad. They had painted on brave faces, matching lipstick, and laughed themselves silly over the port and the charades. Jeremy's impersonations of his colleagues, his best mates, were stiletto-sharp and hilarious. Emily understood banter. She could be one of the boys.

Both sisters knew their dad was puzzled. He had been expecting an explosion, or at least a primed bomb from the pair of them, and had brought out every ounce of charm to try to diffuse them. Yet, they had said nothing about Megan.

Their eyes were full of laughter. They were a family, at ease and joyous in each other's company. Jeremy watched them, and wondered, grateful for the peace and welcome they brought.

He really couldn't imagine better daughters. And Frances, though she had every reason to divorce him, seemed to hold no grudges. He wondered how he had got so lucky.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character Relationships Through Description and Dialogue:

- The contrasting descriptions of Emily's past experiences ("Being Emily Clarkson was not easy") with the present festive scene ("They had painted on brave faces, matching lipstick, and laughed themselves silly") depict a complex family dynamic with underlying tensions.
- While there's no direct confrontation between Emily and her father, the text reveals their strained relationship through subtle details like him expecting "an explosion" and her silent protest via the "#Me2" tattoos.
- The description of their past "very public falling out" provides context for the current strained relationship.

2. Exploring Themes of Family, Forgiveness, and Social Issues Through Character Motivation:

- The story explores the complexities of family relationships, where love and frustration can coexist. The daughters' decision to protest their father's actions silently highlights their internal conflict between wanting to hold him accountable

and wanting to maintain some semblance of family normalcy.

- The theme of forgiveness is hinted at, with Emily and her mother seemingly choosing not to hold grudges despite the father's actions. This leaves room for potential reconciliation in the future.
- The use of the "#Me2" tattoos subtly references a larger social issue of violence against women, connecting the family conflict to a broader societal discussion.

3. Using Subtext and Foreshadowing to Create Intrigue and Tension:

- The excerpt is filled with subtext, leaving much unsaid. The daughters' laughter and silence, the seemingly peaceful Christmas dinner, and the father's confusion all contribute to a sense of underlying tension and unspoken emotions.
- The ending line, with the father thinking he "couldn't imagine better daughters," foreshadows the possibility of a future conflict or disruption to the temporary peace, as their "silence about Megan" cannot be the ultimate resolution to the larger issue.

10. BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

Stephen, a seven-year-old boy, watches the Apollo moon landings in 1969. He pesters his father, a carpenter, that he wants a rocket for Christmas. His parents always get him exactly what he wants for Christmas. He is a single child and they don't appear to know how to say no to him.

He keeps reminding his father that it can't just be a model rocket. It has to be big enough for him to fit inside it. It has to be a real rocket.

Stephen comes down on Christmas morning and finds an 8 foot rocket standing in his living room. He can't believe his eyes. It's so realistic, he's afraid that it might actually take off, but his father reassures him. He promises not to press the red ignition button in a box he holds in front of him.

Stephen steps into the rocket, and climbs into his padded chair. His father smiles at him and locks the latch. He begins a countdown from 30 seconds, as Stephen starts to beg his father, not to press the red button. As the count nears zero, he begins to scream. But his dad doesn't press the button, and Stephen sits back, relief flooding through his body.

He hears the front door slam. His parents have left. They don't come back till Boxing Day. You can imagine what those hours are like – the

anger, terror and disappointment. But, eventually, Stephen is exhausted and falls asleep.

It's Boxing Day. The father opens the rocket to find his son sitting in soiled trousers. The sons eyes stare at him in disbelief.

His father smiles, and says, 'be careful what you wish for.'

How to Start the Story

1. A description of the Apollo landing
2. Stephen's demand for a rocket
3. Stephen's father, excited at finishing the perfect the Christmas present for his son – a present he knows his son will remember forever.

How to End the Story

1. I can't think of a better ending.
2. From Stephen's adult perspective – this is the best Christmas present he ever had
3. You don't have to end it cruelly – the father can open it up much earlier if you want to make it a magical Christmas

5 Act Summary

1. **Obsessive wish:** A young boy, Stephen, fuelled by the excitement of the moon landing, relentlessly asks his parents for a real rocket for Christmas.
2. **Parental indulgence:** Spoiling their only child, Stephen's parents embark on the impossible task of building him a life-sized rocket.

3. **Joy and fear:** On Christmas morning, Stephen finds his dream come true, but the thrill is laced with terror as he imagines taking off into space.
4. **Cruel isolation:** Left alone with his anxieties, Stephen endures a long Christmas night filled with fear and disappointment.
5. **Harsh lesson:** The story ends with a chilling twist, as Stephen's father delivers a harsh lesson about the consequences of unrealistic wishes.

Gemini

Write the ending

Stephen's eyes burned with betrayal, the stench of his own fear clinging to him like a second skin. His father's words, "Be careful what you wish for," echoed in the cramped rocket, a cruel mantra for a shattered dream. Hours, or maybe days, bled into one another. Hunger gnawed at his belly, but it was dwarfed by the gnawing hollowness of abandonment.

He finally stumbled out, legs shaky, gaze darting for escape routes. The house was eerily silent, toys mocking him from their abandoned posts. He found a stale mince pie in the cupboard, its cloying sweetness a sickly reminder of the festive cheer he'd missed. In the living room, the once magnificent rocket seemed mocking, its metallic shell a cage that had held not an astronaut, but a captive of his own desires.

Exhaustion pulled at him, a thick fog settling over his anger. Curling up in the rocket's padded chair, he dreamt of soaring, not among the stars, but through a swirling vortex of blame and disillusionment.

Morning broke pale and unforgiving. Hunger was an insistent drum-beat, urging him to action. He ventured outside, the winter air stinging his tear-streaked cheeks. The neighbourhood, devoid of festive cheer, mirrored the bleakness within him. A snowball hit him, cold and sudden, snapping him out of his daze. Two boys, older, sneered at him.

Something shifted within Stephen. Rage, hot and sharp, replaced the fear. He grabbed a handful of snow and retaliated, the white flurry turning into a playful battle. Soon, laughter echoed through the crisp air, the sound foreign yet strangely freeing. He'd wished for escape, and perhaps, in a way, he'd found it. Not in a fantastical rocket, but in the simple act of defiance, in the shared breath of laughter with strangers.

The return of his parents was a blur. Apologies were mumbled, explanations half-hearted. Stephen listened, a part of him still bruised, but an-

other part, the part that had faced down fear and embraced a snowball war, knew better. There would be scars, of course, cracks in the façade of childhood innocence. But in those cracks, something new was growing - a resilience born from betrayal, a strength forged in the fires of his own unrealistic dream.

The rocket remained, a stark reminder of a wish gone wrong, but also a testament to his survival. He wouldn't be an astronaut, not that way. But perhaps, just perhaps, he could learn to navigate the real world, one messy moment at a time, armed with the knowledge that even the most impossible dreams could hold a seed of something valuable, even if it wasn't quite what he'd bargained for.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Exploring Complex Emotions Through Description and Figurative Language:

- The passage uses vivid descriptions like "eyes burned with betrayal," "stench of his own fear," and "gnawing hollowness of abandonment" to portray Stephen's emotional state effectively.
- Figurative language like "cruel mantra" and "swirling vortex of blame and disillusionment" adds depth and emotional weight to his experience.

2. Demonstrating Character Growth Through Action and Internal Monologue:

- Stephen's transformation from fear and despair to defiance and resilience is shown through his actions. He moves from seeking solace in the rocket to engaging in a snowball fight, demonstrating a shift in his emotional state.

- The internal monologue reveals his evolving thoughts and feelings. While he acknowledges the "bruised" part of him, he also recognizes the newfound "resilience" and the potential for something positive to emerge from this experience.

3. Using Themes and Foreshadowing to Create a Meaningful Narrative:

- The story explores the theme of shattered dreams and the importance of finding new meaning and resilience in the face of disappointment. Stephen's initial wish for a fantastical escape is juxtaposed with the realization that growth can occur through every day experiences and challenges.
- The foreshadowing is subtle, with the father's words "Be careful what you wish for" hinting at the potential consequences of Stephen's desires. However, the ending subverts expectations, suggesting that even wishes gone wrong can hold valuable lessons.

ChatGPT

The early morning light filtered through the gaps in the curtains, casting long shadows across the living room. Stephen's trembling fingers fumbled with the latch, his eyes locking onto his father's as the cold reality of his situation settled in. The weight of his soiled trousers felt like an anchor, pulling him deeper into a whirlpool of fear and regret.

The silence between them was palpable, punctuated only by the distant chirping of birds outside. Stephen's voice caught in his throat, unable to articulate the whirlwind of emotions raging within him. His father's gaze remained steady, the lines of his face etched with a mixture of regret and stern resolve.

"Be careful what you wish for," his father finally whispered, the words hanging heavy in the air between them. Each syllable echoed with a gravity that sent a shiver down Stephen's spine, a haunting reminder of the power of unchecked desires.

As the hours ticked by, the once-celebratory atmosphere of Christmas morning gave way to a sombre reflection of choices made and lessons learned. The towering rocket, once a symbol of boundless imagination and limitless possibilities, now stood as a stark reminder of the dangers lurking within unchecked ambition.

Days turned into weeks, and while the wounds of that fateful morning slowly began to heal, the scars remained. The rocket found a new home, tucked away in the corner of the yard, its towering presence serving as a silent testament to a lesson learned the hard way.

Years later, as Stephen reflected on that pivotal moment, he realized the profound impact it had on shaping the trajectory of his life. The haunting words of his father echoed in his mind, a poignant reminder of the intricate dance between dreams and reality.

And while the scars of that Christmas morning never truly faded, they served as a constant reminder of the importance of balance, perspective, and the enduring power of a father's wisdom.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating a Powerful Atmosphere Through Description and Dialogue:

- The vivid description of the "early morning light filtering through the gaps in the curtains, casting long shadows across the living room" sets a sombre and reflective tone.
- The use of silence and minimal dialogue creates a sense of tension and unspoken emotions between Stephen and his father. His father's single sentence, "Be careful what you wish for," carries significant weight and foreshadows the consequences of unchecked desires.

2. Highlighting Character Growth and the Passage of Time Through Imagery and Details:

- The contrasting descriptions of the "once-celebratory atmosphere" and the "sombre reflection" depict the shift in mood and the consequences of Stephen's actions.
- The "towering rocket" initially symbolizes boundless imagination but later becomes a "silent testament" to the dangers of unchecked ambition, showcasing Stephen's evolving understanding.
- The passage of time is subtly conveyed through phrases like "days turned into weeks" and "years later," highlighting the lasting impact of the experience.

3. Exploring Themes of Regret, Responsibility, and the Importance of Learning Through Figurative Language and Foreshadowing:

- The story explores the theme of regret and the consequences of impulsive decisions through Stephen's fear and the weight of his "soiled trousers."
- The father's words, "Be careful what you wish for," foreshadow the potential consequences of unchecked desires and serve as a reminder of personal responsibility.
- The metaphor of the "whirlpool of fear and regret" and the comparison of the rocket to a "silent testament" add depth and emotional weight to the themes.

Mr Salles Start With a Flashback

James has only one child. Stephen is an amazing son. He's a bundle of energy, full of laughter. He comes home from school with scabbed knees and paint on his fingers, God-knows-what in his hair. Life seems made for him. Perhaps a little too made for him, thinks James.

James thinks back to his childhood, during the war. Climbing through blasted houses, skidding up and down bomb craters. The dead were always cleared away, an open secret. Sometimes they'd find a blood-stained toy, a teddy bear stained red and missing an eye or a limb. Life is precious, precarious, thinks James, and the universe is dark and cold: the unseen clockwork of the stars relentless and impersonal. Is love enough to make Stephen ready for such a world, he wonders?

In his shed now, he takes out his tools, the perfectly sharpened chisels, four kinds of saw, and neatly arranges them next to the strips of pine. Each Christmas, James gives Stephen anything he wants. Last year it was a car. He built each piece by hand, turned it, shaped it, sanded it and joined it. He'd bought the wheels, and Stephen had cherished it for months, until he'd grown too big and reckless, speeding down Kingshill with Barnaby and slamming it into a garden wall. James was thrown into the hedge, utterly, impossibly unharmed. Barnaby, of course, broke his collar bone.

A less dangerous present this year. A cocoon, a womb. But perhaps a whiff of danger.

Apollo 11 had landed on the moon this summer. James couldn't quite believe how the world was changing, accelerating, escaping, it seemed to him, the laws of time. The V2s, the Doodlebugs, which had destroyed parts of London had mutated into rockets which could land mankind on the moon. Death and the miraculous, two sides of the same coin.

So, Stephen had to have a rocket. 'Not just any rocket dad, it has to be big enough to take me to the moon. Like Apollo 12 did, with a window, and an airlock. For Christmas dad. Pleeeeeease.'

On and on, weekend after weekend, Stephen wanted. Stephen expected.

And so James sets to work, measuring, sawing, shaping, sanding, joining, varnishing, painting, riveting the steel and glass hatch, and all the while he thinks of Stephen, his almost perfect son.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character Depth Through Contrasting Experiences and Internal Monologue:

- The story contrasts James's childhood experiences during wartime with Stephen's carefree and joyful present, highlighting their vastly different realities.
- James's internal monologue reveals his struggle with reconciling his own dark past with the secure and safe world he wants to provide for his son. He questions whether love is enough to shield Stephen from the harsh realities of the world.

2. Creating Foreshadowing and Suspense through Character Motivations and Symbolic Objects:

- James's decision to build a "less dangerous present" but still infuse it with "a whiff of danger" foreshadows a potential conflict between his desire to protect Stephen and his need to prepare him for the world.
- The contrast between the "perfectly sharpened chisels" and "strips of pine" used to build the car and the cocoon-like

rocket symbolizes James's internal conflict between his protective instincts and the inevitable reality of growth and potential danger.

3. Exploring Themes of Parental Love, Fear, and the Passage of Time:

- The story explores the depth of a father's love and his anxieties about shielding his child from the harsh realities of the world. James's internal conflict highlights the complex emotions parents grapple with as children grow and become independent.
- The passage of time is subtly conveyed through references to historical events like the war and the moon landing, showcasing the changing world and the challenges of preparing children for an unknown future.

11. PAST PRESENT

A father has five kids. They're all grown up now between the ages of 19 and 32. They all resent him for the parts of their childhood where he went missing, or he remarried to horrible stepmothers while their real mother had died. Although it had not been his fault she died, it had been cancer, they all blamed him because he was not the mother that they wanted.

This Christmas, he listened to all their usual complaints and squabbles, and bought them each something completely inappropriate. The architect got a huge box of Lego. The journalist got a book on how to write. The doctor got a book on homeopathic medicine. The accountant got a book on Zen Buddhism. The house husband got a maids outfit. They all turn to him in puzzlement and disgust and humour mixed with anger. He smiled at them. I've given you the most precious gift of all, he said, shared memories. With that he chuckled and walked out to the pub.

He's dead now, and we all have children of our own, but sure enough we talk about it every Christmas. It has become a Christmas tradition where we will buy each other the most inappropriate present we can find.

How to Start the Story

1. The present, and the narrator is wrapping up something completely tasteless for one of her siblings. The story is told in flashback.

2. In the crisis – a sibling ranting to their father about the present they have just opened.
3. Focus on the father's smiling face as his children explode in all sorts of entertaining ways at the gifts he has given and the memories they bring to the surface.

How to End the Story

1. The narrator looking forward to another inappropriate gift giving.
2. The narrator opening their own inappropriate gift from a sibling, and telling the rest in flashback.

5 Act Summary

1. Haunted by the past: Grown siblings, scarred by childhood resentments, reunite for a tense Christmas.
2. Unexpected gifts: Dad throws a curveball, gifting each child something quirky to ignite shared memories.
3. Confusion and laughter: Initial frustration melts into bewildered amusement as the meaning of the gifts unfolds.
4. A lasting legacy: Years later, the siblings honour their dad's tradition, keeping his spirit alive through playful, offbeat presents.
5. Beyond resentment: The story celebrates the enduring power of family bonds, even when marred by past hurts.

Gemini

"Dad, seriously? Lego? I spend my days wrangling steel and glass, building structures that'll stand the test of time, and you hand me a pile of plastic bricks meant for toddlers? I haven't touched this stuff since I was seven, tripping over rogue Duplo blocks! What am I supposed to do, build you a miniature office out of these? 'Oh, Mr. Jones, your appointment is in the conference room, made entirely of six-stud beams and questionable structural integrity!' It's insulting, alright? You think my creativity needs a babysitter, some pre-packaged playtime to jog my artistic memory? Look, I appreciate the sentiment, the whole 'shared memories' bit, but this? This is just patronizing."

(Takes a breath, eyes the box again)

"Fine. Maybe I'll give it a go. Build something monumental, something worthy of an award in some imaginary Lego world championship. Maybe a self-sustaining Lego metropolis powered by tiny, plastic turbines I'll have to invent myself. Then you can sit here, surrounded by miniature skyscrapers and miniature people applauding my miniature genius, and see who the real architect is around here!"

(Snatches a fistful of Lego pieces, eyes gleaming with a mix of annoyance and playful defiance)

"Alright, Lego, let's see what you've got. Prepare to be moulded into the architectural marvel of the century, even if it takes all night!"

This rant conveys the architect's initial frustration and then flips it into a playful challenge, highlighting their competitive spirit and hidden love for the childhood toy. Feel free to adjust the tone and specific details to further personalise the rant for your story!

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Dynamic Characters Through Dialogue and Internal Monologue:

- The character's initial rant showcases their frustration and disappointment, revealing their personality and perspective.
- The internal monologue ("Maybe I'll give it a go") and the shift in tone towards playful defiance demonstrate the character's complex emotions and potential for growth.

2. Creating Humour and Tension Through Figurative Language and Description:

- The use of humour, like the metaphor of "a miniature office... made entirely of six-stud beams" and the playful jab at the "imaginary Lego world championship," adds light-heartedness to the situation.
- The detailed descriptions, like "wrangling steel and glass" and "miniature skyscrapers," create a vivid image and build tension, making the reader wonder what the character will build.

3. Exploring Themes of Familial Bonds, Nostalgia, and the Importance of Play Through Character Motivation:

- The character's initial resistance and eventual acceptance of the Lego set highlight the complex dynamics of family relationships and the potential for conflict even with good intentions.
- The act of building with Legos connects to themes of nostalgia and the importance of play, suggesting that even adults can find value and enjoyment in activities often associated with childhood.

ChatGPT

As the festive wrapping paper fell away, revealing a sprawling box filled with colourful Lego bricks, Alex's eyes widened in disbelief. The vibrant hues of the Lego pieces seemed to mock him, each one a glaring reminder of his father's perpetual obliviousness.

"Dad, seriously?" Alex exclaimed, his voice tinged with incredulity and a hint of frustration. He held up a tiny Lego brick as if it were evidence in a courtroom. "I'm an architect! I design buildings, real structures that people live and work in. And you get me... this?"

He gestured toward the oversized box, the image of a whimsical Lego castle emblazoned on its cover, a stark contrast to the blueprints and models that typically cluttered Alex's workspace. His fingers clenched around the plastic brick, almost as if he wished it would crumble under the pressure, mirroring the shattered expectations he felt.

"Do you have any idea how many hours I've spent perfecting my craft?" Alex continued, his voice tinged with a blend of exasperation and disappointment. "I've dedicated years to studying architecture, to understanding the nuances of design, functionality, aesthetics... And you think a child's toy is an appropriate gift?"

He paused, taking a deep breath as he attempted to reign in his mounting frustration. With that, Alex set the Lego brick down on the table with a decisive thud, its primary-coloured facade standing in stark contrast to the complex tapestry of emotions that enveloped the room.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character Voice and Emotional Depth Through Dialogue and Description:

- The passage uses vivid descriptions like "eyes widened in disbelief" and "vibrant hues... seemed to mock him" to portray Alex's initial shock and frustration.
- Through dialogue, Alex's voice is established, showcasing his incredulity ("Dad, seriously?") and his disappointment ("Do you have any idea..."). His words reveal his passion for architecture and his perceived underestimation by his father.

2. Creating Conflict and Tension Through Character Interactions and Figurative Language:

- The contrasting image of the "sprawling box filled with colourful Lego bricks" and the "blueprints and models" associated with Alex's work highlight the conflict between his professional identity and the perceived childishness of the gift.
- Figurative language like "glaring reminder" and "shattered expectations" adds depth to Alex's emotional response and emphasizes the tension between him and his father.

3. Exploring Themes of Misunderstanding, Recognition, and the Value of Different Pursuits Through Character Motivation:

- The story explores the theme of misunderstanding, as Alex feels his father doesn't appreciate his professional achievements and dismisses his passion. This highlights the potential for communication gaps within families.
- While the excerpt ends with Alex's frustration, it leaves room for the possibility of future recognition and understanding. The story doesn't claim that Legos are inherently childish,

and Alex's father might have intended to reconnect with his son through a shared experience from their past.

- The potential for the Legos to represent the value of play and imagination, even for adults, is also hinted at. They could become a tool for creative exploration outside the realm of Alex's professional work.

Mr Salles: Start with a Flashback

Here is a list of annoying things about my dad. He loved asking Alexa to play fart noises. He would rewrite the words of songs, and sing them on the toilet. I can still hear Abba's 'What a loo' every time I pass the bathroom. He wore a different and spectacularly ugly Christmas jumper for the 12 days of Christmas. One of them had 5 gold rings, the centre of each being the photo-shopped head of each of his long suffering children. He laughed at the jokes in Christmas crackers, remembered them and dropped them into inappropriate moments.

What do you call a cross between a sheep and a kangaroo? A woolly jumper. But, in dad's retelling, you'd be sitting in a plush restaurant, and he'd wait till the waitress was near, before asking, 'What do you call a suicidal sheep? A woolly jumper'. In an Australian accent. Everyone would have to force a smile. He was an evil Bond villain, tying up Bond and subjecting him to an endless stream of quips while the laser inched ever closer to his limbs or eyes. Only Bond escapes 25 minutes into the movie, whereas we would be trapped till Boxing Day, our limbs metaphorically scarred for life.

The five of us dreaded Christmas. But that wasn't the worst. It was the presents, right into our adulthood. 5 years of study, drawing, researching, having my designs critiqued, torn up and redrafted to become an architect, and each Christmas he'd buy me Lego, Duplo, Sims, Jenga and, at least this one was useful, a candle in the shape of a brick.

It meant I could throw it at him.

Yet here we are. All 5 of us, all at the family home. Dad dead, but we've all returned, like Stockholm hostages, brainwashed, indoctrinated, filled with love.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character and Relationships Through Humour and Vivid Descriptions:

- The passage uses humour to depict the father's personality and his unique brand of silliness, even though it annoys the narrator and their siblings.
- Vivid descriptions like "spectacularly ugly Christmas jumpers" and "photo-shopped head of each of his long suffering children" create a clear image of the father and his festive traditions.

2. Exploring Complex Emotions Through Figurative Language and Internal Monologue:

- While the story uses humour, it also explores the narrator's complex emotions towards their father. Phrases like "dreaded Christmas" and "evil Bond villain" reveal their initial frustration and annoyance.
- The metaphor of "Stockholm hostages" in the last line suggests a deeper understanding and even love for their father, despite his quirks and annoying habits.

3. Using Foreshadowing and Contrast to Create a Memorable Narrative:

- The humorous descriptions of the father's antics foreshadow the narrator's eventual acceptance and even fondness for him, despite their initial annoyance.
- The contrast between the initial portrayal of the father as an "annoyance" and the final image of a loved one, even likened

to a hostage experiencing "Stockholm syndrome," creates a surprising and memorable narrative arc.

12. EL TIGRE

Brian is a backpacker on holiday in Mexico. He's young and broke and having a brilliant time. He sees a wrestler's mask of a tiger face and longs to buy it because it is glorious, over the top, and worn by his favourite wrestler, El Tigre. It is the kind with a zip at the back, and covers the whole head. But if he buys it, he can't pay the rent.

So instead he spends a year in Mexico, becomes fluent in Spanish and a great cook of Mexican food, but he leaves with only one regret. He never did buy that mask.

He returns home, builds a boring career in accounting, and gets engaged to Katerina. She's heard all about his time in Mexico and one birthday manages to track down one of Brian's Facebook friends with a sister in Tiahuanaco who knows the shop that sells the masks. She has it flown over from Mexico.

Brian is delighted. That first night, they joke around, and Katerina asks him to wear the mask in bed. They are both surprised and delighted at the change in his persona and his passion. But soon, Katerina will only allow him into the bedroom if he is wearing the mask. He feels wanted and rejected at the same time.

Soon she is pregnant. She has food cravings, like most mothers do. She develops an expensive urge to keep eating raw steak. They joke that the baby is going to be a massive boy.

How to End the Story

1. The baby's head emerges, already striped with black and gold hair.
2. The baby is born and when it takes its first breath, there is no newborn cry. Instead there is a growl.
3. As the baby is born, Katerina's voice changes from moans to a growl, and as she grips Brains arm, he is aware her fingers have grown claws.

How to Start the Story

1. With the first sighting of the mask in Tiahuanaco
2. When Brian opens his present of the mask.
3. In labour, with the rest told in flashback

5 Act Summary

1. **Lost Opportunity:** Brian, a carefree backpacker in Mexico, longs for a wrestler's mask but prioritizes rent, leaving him with a lingering regret.
2. **Transformation:** Years later, Katerina surprises him with the coveted mask, sparking playful bedroom encounters and a shift in their dynamic.
3. **Power Play:** The mask becomes a gateway for Brian's inner desires and confidence, but also creates an imbalance of power in their relationship.
4. **Unexpected Cravings:** Katerina's pregnancy takes a strange turn with intense and expensive cravings, adding tension and humour to their lives.
5. **Uncertain Future:** The story ends with Brian and Katerina navigating a changing relationship, fuelled by passion, insecurities, and the anticipation of parenthood.

Gemini

Write the ending of this story: The baby is born and when it takes its first breath, there is no new-born cry. Instead there is a growl.

The delivery room fell silent. Katerina, pale and exhausted, cradled a swaddled bundle close, waiting for the primal cry that heralded new life. But it didn't come. Instead, a soft, guttural rumble emanated from the tiny chest nestled against her.

It wasn't a whimper, nor a wail. It was a growl, low and resonant, like the purr of a large cat stirred from sleep. Brian, still shaken from the surreal birth, felt a tremor of fear grip him. In their playful games with the El Tigre mask, they'd joked about a masked baby, a little warrior, but this – this was different.

The growl rumbled again, and the blanket shifted. Tiny fists, impossibly strong for a new-born, pushed against the fabric. Katerina, surprisingly calm, met Brian's terrified gaze. In her eyes, he saw not fear, but wonder. "El Tigrito," she rasped, a ghost of a smile playing on her lips.

News of the growling baby spread through the hospital like wildfire. Doctors, specialists, and even reporters buzzed around the maternity ward, drawn by the medical anomaly. Theories were tossed around like confetti – genetic mutation, delayed vocalization, even whispered stories of mythical children touched by animal spirits.

Brian found himself caught in a whirlwind of tests, scans, and hushed conversations. He clung to Katerina, the only anchor in the storm of uncertainty. Yet, as he held his son, the fear began to give way to a strange pride. El Tigrito, with his fierce growls and unyielding grip, was not a normal baby, but he was theirs.

Days turned into weeks, and the growl evolved. It morphed into gurgles, then coos, finally forming into a shaky cry that sent shivers of relief down Brian's spine. They took their son home, not as the masked war-

rior they'd envisioned, but as something far more extraordinary – a child who defied definition, a living testament to the unexpected turns life can take.

El Tigrito grew. He walked early, talked late, and possessed an uncanny strength that startled even the sturdiest adults. He was a whirlwind of boundless energy and insatiable curiosity, his eyes glinting with the same mischievous glint as the El Tigre mask that hung above his crib.

The doctors never found an explanation for his growl, but Brian and Katerina learned to embrace the mystery. They saw not a curse, but a unique melody woven into the tapestry of their son's being. And each night, beneath the watchful gaze of the tiger mask, they whispered tales of El Tigre, the masked wrestler, and the day their own little Tigrito roared into the world.

The ending leaves the nature of El Tigrito's growl ambiguous, but suggests that Brian and Katerina choose to embrace the mystery and raise their son as something special, rather than fearing what they don't understand. It adds a layer of wonder and hope to their journey as parents, and encourages the reader to appreciate the beauty of the unexpected in life.

Please note that this ending avoids potentially sensational themes and focuses on the emotional journey of the parents and the celebration of their unique child. The story can be further developed to explore the challenges and joys of raising a child with such unique traits, while maintaining a focus on family love and acceptance.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Suspense and Wonder Through Foreshadowing and Unconventional Elements:

- The silent delivery room and the baby's unusual growl set the stage for a story shrouded in mystery and intrigue.

- The playful mention of the El Tigre mask earlier foreshadows the connection Brian and Katerina eventually make to their son's growl, adding a layer of wonder and playful expectation.

2. Developing Compelling Characters Through Their Responses and Actions:

- Katerina's calmness and Brian's initial fear showcase their contrasting personalities and reactions to the extraordinary event.
- Brian's transformation from fear to a "strange pride" highlights his evolving relationship with his son and his acceptance of the unexpected.

3. Exploring Themes of Familial Love, Acceptance, and Embracing the Unexpected Through Character Growth and Setting:

- The story emphasizes the unwavering love between Brian and Katerina despite the unusual circumstances surrounding their son's birth.
- Brian and Katerina's journey from confusion, fear, and medical scrutiny to accepting their son's uniqueness showcases the theme of embracing the unexpected and finding beauty in the extraordinary.

ChatGPT

The sterile hospital room was filled with an eerie silence, punctuated only by the muffled sounds of medical equipment humming in the background. As the doctor gently cradled the new-born, a palpable tension gripped the room, each person present holding their breath in anxious anticipation.

Instead of the customary cry that typically heralded a new life entering the world, a low, guttural growl reverberated through the air. The sound sent shivers down the spines of the medical staff, their eyes widening in disbelief. The parents exchanged bewildered glances, their expressions a mixture of shock and profound confusion.

The doctor, attempting to mask his own astonishment, carefully examined the infant, searching for any logical explanation for the inexplicable noise. As he listened intently to the rhythmic growling, a sense of unease settled over him, challenging everything he thought he knew about the boundaries of nature and science.

Whispers began to circulate among the medical team, their voices tinged with a combination of wonder and trepidation. Nurses exchanged hurried glances, their eyes meeting in silent acknowledgment of the unprecedented phenomenon unfolding before them.

Outside the room, the once-muted celebrations of new life had transformed into hushed conversations filled with speculation and uncertainty. Word spread quickly through the hospital corridors, drawing medical professionals from every corner to witness the inexplicable spectacle.

As the hours passed, experts from various fields descended upon the hospital, each one more baffled than the last. News crews gathered outside, their cameras poised to capture the moment that defied all scientific explanation.

Yet, amidst the chaos and speculation, the new-born's parents remained steadfast, their love for their child unwavering. They held onto each other tightly, finding solace in their shared determination to protect their unique and extraordinary child from a world that might never understand.

And so, in a small hospital room filled with the weight of the unknown, a family prepared to embark on a journey unlike any other, their lives forever altered by the miraculous and mysterious arrival of their growling new-born.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating a Compelling Atmosphere and Building Suspense Through Setting, Description, and Pacing:

- The sterile and silent hospital room, punctuated by the "muffled sounds of medical equipment," sets a tense and clinical atmosphere.
- The use of descriptive language like "guttural growl," "shivers down the spines," and "widening in disbelief" heightens the suspense and conveys the characters' emotional state.
- The slow pacing, focusing on each character's reaction and the gradual escalation of events, builds anticipation and leaves the reader wanting to know more.

2. Introducing the Extraordinary Through Contrast and Foreshadowing:

- The "sterile hospital room" representing normalcy contrasts with the "inexplicable growl," foreshadowing the extraordinary event that disrupts the typical birth experience.
- The muted celebrations outside transforming into "hushed conversations" subtly hints at the unusual nature of the baby's arrival.

3. Exploring Themes of Parental Love, the Unknown, and the Boundaries of Science Through Character Interactions and Setting:

- The parents' "bewildered glances" and "expressions of shock" showcase their initial confusion but also their unwavering love for their child.
- The doctors' "unease" and "astonishment" highlight the element of the unknown and the challenge it poses to their scientific knowledge.
- The setting, a "small hospital room," emphasizes the ordinariness of the location where something extraordinary unfolds, prompting reflection on the vastness of the unknown and the limitations of human understanding.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

Brian finished packing the hospital bag, but he paused before going back downstairs.

“Brian,” Kat roared, “these waters are going to break like a goddam tsunami, I need you to be ready!”

He took deep, calming breaths. He knew every couple’s lives were turned upside down by pregnancy and the responsibility of caring for a new human being, but he also knew the changes in Katerina were more profound. Everything was urgent.

Food cravings were normal, but Katerina’s desire for barely cooked steak at breakfast and lunch was somehow savage and primal. He couldn’t remember a time when she’d drank milk before. All her appetites were vast. Everything in the bedroom was different too – he felt as though the mask had somehow possessed them, as though neither of them controlled their own bodies.

The sudden new-ness of everything was exciting and shocking, bathing in ice water. His body and mind were both suddenly awake and terrified of what was coming. If Kat insisted her waters were about to break, he believed they would. She understood her body like some people can learn multiple languages.

He left the El Tigre mask on the bed, looking up at him. She’d bought it for him as an impossible romantic gesture, tracking it down from his Facebook posts of his travelling year in Mexico, incredibly finding the shop whose prices had been too much for his student budget, bringing it home for him. He couldn’t explain why he’d wanted it so much. He couldn’t explain the change in Kat, the moment he put it on.

He rushed downstairs, tossed the bag over his shoulder, grabbed the keys and went to meet her at the door, her belly huge, her smile wide

and eager. Unexpectedly she kissed him, and purred in his ear, "say goodbye to the old world, Bri."

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character Dynamics Through Dialogue and Internal Monologue:

- The contrasting dialogue between Brian and Kat ("Brain!" vs. "say goodbye to the old world, Bri") showcases their differing personalities and approaches to the situation.
- Brian's internal monologue reveals his anxieties and observations about the changes in Kat and their dynamic.

2. Creating Foreshadowing and Suspense Through Figurative Language and Description:

- Kat's metaphor, "these waters are going to break like a god-dam tsunami," foreshadows the intensity of the childbirth experience and creates suspense.
- Brian's description of the room feeling "possessed" and the newness being "shocking, bathing in ice water" uses figurative language to convey the overwhelming and unpredictable nature of the situation.

3. Exploring Themes of Change, Anticipation, and the Power of Connection Through Character Interactions and Setting:

- The passage highlights the significant changes Kat and Brian are experiencing due to the pregnancy, emphasizing the theme of transition and adaptation.
- The anticipation of the approaching birth creates suspense and underscores the theme of the unknown future.

- Despite the fear and uncertainty, Brian and Kat's kiss and shared moment at the door portray the power of connection and emotional support during a significant life event.

15. THE FIX

Aliyah is having fertility treatment, but it is not working. There are six courses, and the first five haven't worked. She knows she is ovulating today, and is due to take the last treatment. But she wonders if there is a better way? Instead of going to the fertility clinic, she decides to look up the poshest hotel she can find with a good gym, and finds one 80 miles away. She packs her best gym kit and heads off. She checks in and the concierge tells her the showers will be out of action for the next hour, but otherwise, first class service is guaranteed.

She changes and descends to the gym and pool, looking for attractive men, shopping in a gene pool. The price of the hotel maximises the chance that the men will be successful, hardworking and intelligent. Then there is height, proportion and symmetry to think about. What better place than the exclusive gym? Like Goldilocks, she sifts through the candidates as she trains, finding three who look the part. She engages all three in conversation – one is too arrogant, another is too vain, but the third has a sense of humour and is genuinely interested in talking to her, rather than scanning her lycra for curves.

She suggests a drink in the bar, and then she lays out her proposition. She is open about wanting to get pregnant, and this is going to be a one shot deal. He agrees, and she and Richard retire to her hotel room.

'I can fix your problem,' he says, 'and it will be my pleasure.'

Afterwards, he asks for her phone number and she gives him a false one. She's left her mobile at home in case her husband tracks it.

And that was that. Success. A baby girl, Amelia, is born. 12 months later, the boiler dies and her husband finds a plumber.

"I can fix that," says Richard, as Aliyah walks into the kitchen with Amelia in her arms.

How to End the Story

1. As it is, so we don't know if Richard is only talking about the plumbing
2. There is a spark of recognition from Amelia
3. Aliyah laughs, and the tension disappears
4. 'Crap,' thinks Aliyah, 'daddy is a plumber!'

How to Start the Story

1. 'Aliyah decided today was the day she would get pregnant'.
2. Or, start in media res, scanning suitable men in the gym.
3. Start with a crisis, the boiler dying, Aliyah looking at Amelia learning to walk, and remembering how she had been conceived. This happens in flashback before the plumber arrives.

5 Act Summary

1. Frustrated by failing fertility treatments: Aliyah, desperate for a child, seeks an unconventional solution and heads to a luxury hotel gym to find a suitable sperm donor.
2. Selective "shopping": Amidst the high-achieving, well-toned clientele, Aliyah carefully evaluates potential candidates before choosing Richard, drawn to his intelligence and humour.

3. A proposition and fulfilment: After a candid conversation, she proposes a one-time encounter with Richard, who readily agrees. Their encounter is transactional yet laced with a surprising connection.
4. Success, secrecy, and motherhood: Aliyah successfully conceives and raises a daughter, Amelia, while meticulously keeping her unconventional origin a secret from her husband and the world.
5. Unexpected reunion: A year later, a twist of fate reunites Aliyah and Richard when he becomes the plumber fixing their broken boiler. The ending leaves the future open to interpretation, hinting at potential complications and the weight of her secret.

Gemini

Write the Beginning

Aliyah stared at the empty vial, the remnants of fertility drugs clinging to its glass walls like mocking tears. Six vials, six empty promises nestled in the plush velvet box that had once held hope, now a cruel repository of disappointment. The sixth empty vial felt final, a heavy stone settling in her already overburdened womb.

Her eyes drifted to the calendar, marked with dates circled in black, days of meticulous charting and clinical calculations that had failed to birth a miracle. The house, once echoing with the phantom cries of children she never held, lay suffocatingly silent. Each tick of the clock was a tiny barb of accusation, reminding her of aging ovaries and the dwindling odds.

Desperation, acrid and raw, clawed at her throat. The fertility clinic, its sterile, white walls and hollow reassurances, felt like a tomb. She needed an escape, not from reality, but from its bleak predictability. With a surge of rebellion, she abandoned the familiar routine, the crushing silence of her empty home.

Her phone vibrated in her hand, a lifeline offering fleeting distraction. She scrolled through images of impossibly glamorous hotels, marble bathrooms glittering under chandeliers, infinity pools stretching towards breath-taking horizons. A reckless idea, born from desperation and a flicker of defiance, sprouted in her mind.

Instead of the clinic, she booked the most opulent hotel she could find, eighty miles away. The price tag, astronomical, was her admission fee to a different kind of lottery, a gamble with genetics instead of hormones. The gym, with its promise of sculpted silhouettes and toned bodies, would be her hunting ground. She packed her best gym kit, weapons not

for exercise but for selection, each piece of fabric imbued with the desperate prayer for one perfect shot.

As the miles melted away under the spinning wheels of her car, a mix of fear and exhilaration crackled in her veins. This was madness, reckless, reckless, a chorus of doubts chanted in her head. But another voice, quieter yet firmer, countered: what did she have to lose? Six empty vials and a heart drowning in the echo of unborn whispers. In the hushed expanse of the highway, amidst the roar of the engine and the whispers of the wind, Aliyah knew she had one last shot at rewriting her destiny, unconventional and fraught as it might be.

The ivory facade of the hotel rose from the landscape like a mirage, a monument to excess that mirrored the turmoil in her heart. With each step into its gilded interior, she shed the cloak of wife and barren woman, transforming into a hunter in a playground for desirable genes. The air thrummed with unspoken promises, the scent of luxury masking the desperation that drove her. The Fix, she thought, a grimly ironic name for a hotel promising everything, yet offering her only one, elusive prize.

The journey had just begun, and the path ahead was shrouded in uncertainty. But beneath the veneer of desperation, a spark of defiance flickered, a flicker that refused to be extinguished. In the opulent gym, amongst the treadmills and weights, Aliyah would stalk her prey, hoping, against all odds, to find the fix she craved, the fix that would rewrite her empty future and paint it with the vibrant hues of motherhood.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing a Compelling Character Through Description, Figurative Language, and Internal Monologue:

- The descriptions of the "empty vial," "mocking tears," and "overburdened womb" use vivid imagery to portray Aliyah's emotional state and physical struggles.
- Figurative language like "a tomb" and "a chorus of doubts" creates a strong emotional impact and reveals Aliyah's internal conflict and desperation.
- Internal monologues like "what did she have to lose?" and "a spark of defiance flickered" give insight into Aliyah's thought process and motivations.

2. Creating Suspense and Foreshadowing Through Pacing, Description, and Character Motivation:

- The slow pacing of the excerpt, focusing on Aliyah's observations and internal struggles, builds suspense and allows the reader to anticipate her next move.
- Descriptions like the "suffocatingly silent house" and the "astronomical price tag" of the hotel foreshadow the emotional weight and potential consequences of Aliyah's unconventional decision.
- Aliyah's desperation and the "reckless idea" she hatches create a sense of anticipation and uncertainty about the future.

3. Exploring Themes of Hope, Loss, and the Pursuit of Motherhood Through Character Actions and Setting:

- The empty vials and the marked calendar symbolize Aliyah's struggle with infertility and the loss of hope associated with failed fertility treatments.

- Aliyah's escape from the "sterile" clinic and the "crushing silence" of her home highlight her search for hope and a different path to motherhood.
- The luxurious hotel, a symbol of excess, ironically becomes the setting for Aliyah's unconventional and desperate attempt to achieve her dream of becoming a mother.

ChatGPT

Aliyah paced the familiar confines of her kitchen, her gaze drifting to the calendar adorned with countless circled dates and notes scrawled in anticipation. Each passing month brought a renewed sense of hope, followed by crushing disappointment. The relentless cycle of fertility treatments had become an all-consuming obsession, a maze of medical jargon and sterile clinical environments that yielded no answers, only heartache.

As the weight of another failed treatment bore down on her, a flicker of defiance ignited within Aliyah. She craved a sense of control, a departure from the impersonal routine that had overshadowed her life. Amidst the sea of brochures and medical pamphlets, a daring thought took root—what if there was another way?

With a newfound determination, Aliyah embarked on a clandestine mission, scouring the internet for a solution that resonated with her longing for autonomy. Her search led her to an opulent sanctuary nestled eighty miles away—a haven promising respite and, perhaps, a chance at the elusive dream that had eluded her for so long.

With measured steps, she ascended the grand staircase of the luxurious hotel, her heart racing with a blend of trepidation and exhilaration. The concierge's reassuring smile offered a momentary reprieve, a fleeting glimpse of the indulgence that awaited her. Yet, beneath the veneer of extravagance lay a calculated plan, a meticulously orchestrated scheme to defy the odds and seize control of her destiny.

As Aliyah exchanged pleasantries with the concierge, her thoughts drifted to the exclusive gym that beckoned, a stage set for her audacious endeavour. With each passing moment, the boundaries between desperation and determination blurred, propelling her toward a path fraught with risk and reward.

Unbeknownst to her, this pivotal decision would set in motion a chain of events that defied convention, challenging societal norms and confronting the complexities of love, morality, and the relentless pursuit of happiness.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing Character Motivation and Internal Conflict Through Description and Internal Monologue:

- The detailed descriptions of the "circled dates" and "sterile clinical environments" showcase the repetitiveness and emotional toll of Aliyah's fertility treatments.
- Internal monologues like "a flicker of defiance ignited" and "a daring thought took root" reveal Aliyah's growing frustration and her desire for an alternative path.

2. Creating Suspense and Foreshadowing Through Pacing, Setting, and Character Decisions:

- The slow pacing of the excerpt, focusing on Aliyah's contemplation and internal conflict, builds suspense and allows the reader to anticipate her next move.
- The luxurious hotel setting, contrasting with the "sterile clinical environments," foreshadows the unconventional and potentially risky path Aliyah is about to embark on.
- Aliyah's decision to seek an unconventional solution plants the seeds of suspense and foreshadows the potential challenges and consequences of her actions.

3. Exploring Themes of Hope, Agency, and the Societal Pressures Around Motherhood Through Character Actions and Setting:

- The relentless pursuit of fertility treatments despite "crushing disappointment" highlights Aliyah's unwavering hope for motherhood.
- Aliyah's search for "control" and a "clandestine mission" showcase her desire for agency and a departure from societal expectations around procreation.
- The contrasting settings of the sterile clinic and the luxurious hotel symbolize the societal pressures and expectations surrounding motherhood and Aliyah's attempt to navigate them on her own terms.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

Aliyah had made up her mind, which was putting it mildly. Aliyah bent the world to her will. Her will was to have a child, a daughter in fact, perfect and perhaps doll like, at least to start with, but beautiful. Like her mother.

Nature had other plans, and thermometers and cycles and Egyptian linen, scented candles and an obedient husband had made no difference to her fertility, and, so Nature seemed to think, She had the last laugh.

No. Aliyah would not be bested. Aliyah had been thinking about this last round of IVF all week. The first five rounds had yielded nothing. Which was no surprise. The sterile environment of the surgery, the instruments, the matter-of-factness of it all as she was served up like a dish in a Micheline star restaurant, could only lead to a sterile result.

No, this week, she would take matters into her own hands. She'd scouted out the best hotel she could find 80 miles away. Anonymity and luxury guaranteed. But also, and Aliyah would never apologise for this, the 'donor' would have a track record of success. Rooms starting at £500 a night brought in a certain clientele. The state of the art gym, swimming pool and spa guaranteed an excellent gene pool. Money, brains and looks – the perfect trifecta. Aliyah would find her man.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing a Strong-Willed Character Through Dialogue, Description, and Figurative Language:

- The passage uses strong verbs like "bent the world" and "would not be bested" to showcase Aliyah's determined and unwavering personality.

- Descriptive phrases like "Egyptian linen, scented candles, and an obedient husband" paint a picture of Aliyah's desire for control and the lengths she's willing to go to achieve it.
- The metaphor comparing the sterile environment to being "served up like a dish" emphasizes Aliyah's objectification and her defiance against the system.

2. Creating Conflict and Tension Through Character Motivation and Contrasting Settings:

- The clear contrast between Aliyah's desire for control and the limitations imposed by "Nature" creates a central conflict driving the narrative forward.
- The juxtaposition of the "sterile environment" of the surgery with the luxurious hotel setting highlights Aliyah's unconventional and potentially risky approach to achieving her goal.

3. Exploring Themes of Societal Pressures, Gender Roles, and Reproductive Rights Through Character Traits and Internal Monologue:

- Aliyah's specific desire for a "perfect" and "doll-like" daughter reflects societal pressures surrounding beauty standards and the expectation of motherhood.
- The mention of an "obedient husband" hints at potential gender role expectations and the power dynamics within Aliyah's marriage.
- Aliyah's determination to "take matters into her own hands" and the language of "winning" surrounding fertility suggests

a complex relationship with societal expectations and the desire for reproductive autonomy.

16. THE MOST FAMOUS ARTIST IN THE WORLD

Jack had always known the future.

His mother visited a fortune teller, who predicted she would move to America, marry an unsuccessful actor, and have a son who becomes a famous artist.

And, Andrea would tell him, each birthday and Christmas, that this is how she came to Hollywood, this is how she married Arthur, one of the hardest working extras in Los Angeles, and why she had called him Jack, after the famous artist Jackson Pollock.

Over time, the family legend grew, and Jack was the great hope. With fame would come fortune, and the family would live, as the Americans say, high on the hog.

Jack threw himself into his artistic studies. His parents scrimped and saved to get him into the best schools. He became a master of colour, and experimented with new paints. He patented a glossy paint using hydrofluoric acid mixed with gold leaf. He could afford only one batch of paint, and used it for a dozen years. It produced vibrant and expensive masterpieces. But he didn't sell many. He earned just enough to keep him going. Fame and success just wouldn't come to him.

Then when Jack was 35, a famous film director (Quentin Tarantino) bought one of his paintings, full of blood reds and hints of violence.

He knew this would lead to a flood of orders. And then it happened. Tarantino held an exhibition of his private collection. Jack and his parents were invited. The great and good of Hollywood were going to see one of his masterpieces, and they would be rich enough to afford his work. With a feeling of elation, dressed in their best clothes, Jack and his parents stood in front of his painting, drinking champagne with the rich and famous, with Hollywood royalty.

And this is how it happened. The hydrofluoric acid separated from the gold leaf. It burned a hole through each primary colour, and the canvas started to smoke in patches before his eyes. Within minutes, Tik Tok, YouTube and a dozen news channels were abuzz with his smoking painting. In houses around Los Angeles, canvases Jack had agonised over for the last dozen years, all began to smoke and turn black and grey with burnt-out holes.

And so it was that Jack became the most famous artist in the world.

How to Start the Story

1. At the art exhibition, Jack and his family elated.
2. One week later, Jack on a rooftop, wondering whether to jump – told in flashback
3. Jack, now famous and rich. His burnt out paintings have become cult classics. But his paintings are the complete opposite of what he values as art. Will he be bitter? Tell the story in flashback.

How to End the Story

1. Jack on the ledge, wondering whether to jump
2. Jack in mid-flight as he falls, his life passing before his eyes
3. Jack laughing his head off as he becomes rich

4. Jack laughing hysterically with Quentin Tarantino as he watches the painting smoulder
5. Jack giving up painting

5 Act Summary

1. **Destiny's Shadow:** Haunted by a fortune teller's prediction, Jack pursues a career in art, burdened by the expectation of becoming "the most famous artist in the world."
2. **Struggle and Obsession:** Despite talent and experimentation, Jack faces years of financial hardship and lack of recognition, clinging to the promise of his destiny.
3. **A Brush with Success:** A renowned director buys one of Jack's violent-themed paintings, raising hopes of a career breakthrough.
4. **Unexpected Turnaround:** In a cruel twist of fate, the unique gold leaf paint Jack spent years developing spontaneously combusts at a high-profile exhibition, engulfing his entire body of work in flames.
5. **Viral Infamy:** The burning canvases, captured on social media, propel Jack to unexpected fame, not as a celebrated artist, but as the creator of the "exploding art" phenomenon.

Gemini

Write the beginning of the story with Jack on the ledge, wondering whether to jump. Tell the story in flashback.

The smog-choked air clawed at my throat, tasting of disappointment and burnt paint. Below, the Los Angeles sprawl sprawled like a glittering lie, mocking my failure. Ten stories below, the pavement promised oblivion, an end to the gnawing hunger in my stomach, the hollowness echoing not just in my belly but in my soul.

My fingers, numb from the biting wind, gripped the rough concrete ledge. A kaleidoscope of memories flickered behind my closed eyelids, each frame a cruel reminder of the artist I wasn't, the future I never claimed.

Andrea's warm, calloused hand in mine, whispering tales of a son destined for canvases splashed with gold, not a son staring down at pavement stained with despair. Arthur, my father, eternally hopeful, a twinkle in his one good eye even as years of failed exhibitions chipped away at his optimism. Their faces, etched with love and a belief that surpassed logic, swam in the blurry haze of tears I dared not shed.

The fortune teller's rasping voice, weaving a future tapestry with every clinking bead and muttered charm, "Your son, he will paint America red, burn bright like a supernova." Red, I thought, bitter laughter catching in my throat. The only red I knew was the burning anger that pulsed through me, the blood-tinged dreams of recognition curdling into resentment.

Years of relentless pursuit, chasing shadows of ambition while reality gnawed at my heels. Brushes dancing across canvases, birthing vibrant monsters born of frustration and desperation. The hydrofluoric acid paint, a forbidden alchemy I'd perfected, its gold-leafed shimmer whispering promises of untold wealth. A dozen years on a single batch, each

stroke a whispered prayer, each unbought masterpiece a fresh scar on my pride.

Then, Tarantino. The name that shimmered like a mirage in the desert of my career. His purchase, a meteor in the barren landscape of my life. The invitation to the gala, an oasis shimmering with champagne and velvet smiles. Hollywood glitter, a world away from the peeling paint of my studio, promising to finally bathe me in the golden light of success.

And then, the fire. Not the flames of recognition I'd craved, but a literal inferno birthed from my own creation. The acid devouring the gold, my paintings self-immolating before a roomful of gasps and stifled screams. My life's work, reduced to charcoal and smoke, carried away on the California wind.

The laughter, at first shocked, then hysterical, echoed in my ears. "Exploding art," they called it, a morbid spectacle, a viral joke at my expense. The most famous artist in the world, they said, the man who made his canvases burn.

But fame tasted like ashes in my mouth. From the ledge, I saw not Hollywood's glitz, but the flickering gaslight of my childhood apartment, the echo of my mother's whispered prophecy. Was this the future she saw? This bitter parody of success?

A gust of wind whipped my hair, and with it, a sudden clarity. Fame, however twisted, was a lifeline. A chance to claw my way back from the edge, to rewrite the story, not as the artist who failed to burn bright, but as the one who rose from the ashes of his own destruction.

With a shaky breath, I pushed myself away from the ledge, the city lights blurring as I plummeted not towards oblivion, but towards a new kind of fire, a fire fuelled by rage, tempered by resilience, and ignited by the twisted irony of my own infamy. I was Jack Pollock, no longer the son of prophecy, but the architect of my own, explosive destiny.

And the city below, unaware of the inferno brewing in my heart, awaited the next act of the "exploding artist," the showman of self-destruction who'd traded brushes for gasoline, ready to paint his legacy in smoke and embers.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing a Compelling Character Through Vivid Descriptions, Figurative Language, and Flashbacks:

- The descriptive language paints a vivid picture of the setting, the character's emotions, and his internal conflict. Phrases like "smog-choked air," "gnawing hunger," and "kaleidoscope of memories" create a powerful sensory experience.
- The use of figurative language like "glittering lie," "monsters born of frustration," and "burning bright like a supernova" adds depth and complexity to the character's thoughts and feelings.
- Flashbacks to his past experiences with Andrea, his father, and the fortune teller provide context for his motivations and reveal the weight of unfulfilled dreams.

2. Creating Suspense and Character Transformation Through Internal Conflict and External Events:

- The character's initial position on the ledge and the description of his surroundings create a sense of suspense and uncertainty about his potential actions.
- The internal conflict between his past dreams and his present failures drives the narrative forward and builds tension.

- The burning of his artwork and the subsequent ridicule become the turning point in the story, forcing the character to confront his failures and seek a different path.

3. Exploring Themes of Failure, Redemption, and Redefining Success Through Character Development and Setting:

- The character's journey from an unsuccessful artist contemplating suicide to a man embracing his "explosive destiny" showcases the theme of redemption and finding meaning within failure.
- The contrasting settings of the rooftop and the "glittering lie" of Los Angeles symbolize the character's disillusionment with his initial aspirations and his shift towards a new definition of success based on personal empowerment and defiance.

ChatGPT

Jack stood precariously on the edge of the building, his toes peeking over the ledge as he stared into the abyss below. The cacophony of the bustling city faded into a muted hum, drowned out by the relentless whispers echoing in his mind. The weight of unfulfilled dreams pressed heavily upon him, a relentless burden that had grown insurmountable with each passing day. The city lights shimmered beneath him, a tantalizing beacon of the fame and success that had eluded him for so long.

As the chilling wind tousled his hair and whispered haunting lullabies of despair, Jack's thoughts drifted back to a time when the future seemed bright with promise. His mother's unwavering belief in the fortune teller's prophecy had been the catalyst for their journey to America—a land of endless possibilities and dreams waiting to be realized. Her tales of destiny and legacy had shaped his worldview, instilling in him a sense of purpose and determination that had propelled him toward his artistic pursuits.

Under the watchful gaze of his parents, Jack had immersed himself in the vibrant tapestry of the art world, honing his skills and pushing the boundaries of conventional wisdom. His innovative spirit had led him to patent a revolutionary paint, a luminous blend of hydrofluoric acid and gold leaf that breathed life into his canvases with unparalleled brilliance. Yet, despite his relentless dedication and unwavering passion, the elusive spotlight of fame remained just beyond his grasp.

The memory of Quentin Tarantino's fateful purchase had reignited Jack's dwindling hope, promising a glimmer of the recognition he so desperately craved. The anticipation of the upcoming exhibition had been a beacon of hope, a tantalizing glimpse of the validation that had remained agonizingly out of reach. But as the moments ticked away, the cruel twist of fate had shattered his dreams, reducing his life's work to smouldering embers and echoing laughter.

As the chilling reality of his shattered aspirations enveloped him, Jack's mind raced with memories of a lifetime defined by unfulfilled potential and shattered dreams. With each heartbeat echoing the relentless rhythm of his internal turmoil, he stood on the precipice of despair, grappling with the haunting echoes of a past overshadowed by unfulfilled promises and shattered illusions.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Character Depth and Complexity Through Description, Internal Monologue, and Flashbacks:

- The descriptive language paints a vivid picture of the setting and the character's emotional state. Phrases like "cacophony faded into a muted hum," "relentless whispers," and "burden that had grown insurmountable" create a strong sense of despair and internal conflict.
- Internal monologues like "the weight of unfulfilled dreams" and "haunting lullabies of despair" reveal the character's thoughts and feelings, allowing readers to understand his motivations and emotional state.
- Flashbacks to his past experiences with his mother, the prophecy, and his artistic journey provide context for his present actions and showcase the evolution of his dreams and aspirations.

2. Creating Suspense and Foreshadowing Through Setting, Figurative Language, and Character's Internal Conflict:

- The precarious setting on the edge of the building and the character's contemplation of the "abyss" create a sense of suspense and foreshadow the potential for a tragic outcome.

- Figurative language like "city lights shimmered like a tantalizing beacon" and "elusive spotlight of fame" establishes the character's yearning for success and foreshadows the potential challenges he faces in achieving it.
- The internal conflict between his unfulfilled dreams and the societal pressure to achieve fame creates tension and leaves the reader questioning the character's ultimate decision.

3. Exploring Themes of Dreams, Failure, and the Pursuit of Validation Through Character Development and Setting:

- The character's journey from a hopeful artist to a man contemplating despair highlights the theme of confronting failure and the emotional toll of unfulfilled dreams.
- The contrasting images of the "bright future" promised by the prophecy and the "chilling reality" of Jack's present situation reflect the harsh realities of pursuing creative endeavours and the challenges of achieving societal validation.
- The setting on the rooftop, overlooking the city lights, symbolizes the character's isolation, his distance from his initial dream of artistic recognition, and the potential consequences of succumbing to despair.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

And this is how it happened. The hydrofluoric acid separated from the gold leaf. It burned a hole through each primary colour, and the canvas started to smoke in patches before his eyes. Within minutes, Tik Tok, YouTube and a dozen news channels were abuzz with his smoking paintings. In houses around Los Angeles, canvases Jack had agonised over for the last dozen years, all began to turn black and grey, smoking with burnt out holes.

Jack stood on the ledge of his house in the Hollywood hills. A gated community, where the uber-rich made hermits of themselves, security teams vetting every visitor. No harm could reach him here.

And yet, here he stood, swaying in another perfect sunset, high in the hills. His art had taken a lifetime, and now, he wondered, it might take a life. A fitting tribute to his genius. He smiled bitterly at the irony of if his mother's faith. A fortune teller, some Albanian immigrant desperate to make ends meet down on Venice beach in the 70s, had told her that 7 year old Jack would grow up to be the most famous artist in the world.

A charming old wives' tale of a prophecy, but it had placed a spell on him anyway. He loved, no he longed to draw, and then to paint. He studied every art movement, could walk into any museum anywhere and date each painting, remember the cadence of each brush stroke, the patina of light, the perfect composition. What he could see in a painting was sublime – his eyes sucking the world in like an 8K TV screen, seeing quality beyond the reach of the normal brain.

He inched forward, his toes now over the edge, less balanced, more real. Jack had found a way to bind gold into his paint, 24 carat liquid sunlight that seemed to move with the observer, like organic lightning, springing unexpectedly, so that his landscapes and portraits seemed to have an inner life of their own.

He looked down at the rocks below and counted the years of sacrifice. And then he thought about the last 2 years of sudden fame. Everyone had wanted to know the secret of his paint.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting Compelling Irony and Dramatic Moments Through Description and Character Action:

- The stark contrast between Jack's past dedication and the "smoking paintings" creates a sense of dramatic irony, highlighting the devastating and unexpected outcome of his artistic pursuit.
- Jack's position on the ledge, "less balanced, more real," and his act of "inching forward" create a sense of suspense and foreshadow the potential for a tragic resolution.

2. Developing a Complex Character Through Internal Monologue and Flashbacks:

- The internal monologues like "a fitting tribute to his genius" and "charming old wives tale of a prophecy" reveal Jack's conflicting emotions, his bitterness towards the unfulfilled prophecy, and his complex relationship with his art.
- The flashbacks to his childhood passion for art and his exceptional artistic abilities showcase the foundation of his dreams and the weight of his perceived failure.

3. Exploring Themes of Dedication, Disillusionment, and the Burdens of Expectation Through Character Development and Setting:

- Jack's journey from a dedicated and talented artist to a disillusioned man contemplating suicide highlights the theme

of the emotional toll of unfulfilled potential and societal expectations.

- The gated community setting, initially presented as a place of safety and wealth, becomes symbolic of Jack's isolation and the emptiness he feels despite achieving a certain level of material success.
- The contrasting memories of his childhood wonder towards art and the present reality of his burning artwork emphasize the theme of disillusionment and the burden of a lifelong dream turning into a source of despair.

17. WATER INTO WINE

Eduardo was in love with Eugenie. She came from a wealthy family, and had a family name which stretched back through centuries of nobility. Eugenie's parents, Anne and Edward, were wealthy, but bored. Private helicopter, check. Private plane, check. Houses in London, Paris and Switzerland, check. Summers in Tuscany and Martha's Vineyard, check and check again.

Eugenie was a doctor, who wanted to make a difference in the world, rather than live off her parents' money. Eduardo worked for his family vineyard. Wine was his passion, second only, of course, to the beautiful Eugenie.

It would be Andrew's sixtieth birthday tomorrow, and Eugenie told Eduardo this would be the perfect time to ask for her parents' permission to marry her. All he had to do was impress them. But what do you get for parents who have more money than they know how to spend? Wine, said Eduardo, the most unusual wine that money can buy. Leave it to me, he told Eugenie.

In the month leading up to the birthday, Eduardo drank litres and litres of water every day. He sunbathed for an all over body tan. He shaved every hair from his body. At last he was ready, and told Eugenie the final part of his plan. She screamed in horror and delight. Then she said yes.

And so after the main course, Eduardo announced he had to get the desert wine, prepared especially in his parents' vineyard. He returned

minutes later with the wine glasses, a silver tray, and a bottle as conspicuous by its absence as Eduardo's clothes. His tanned and sculpted body drew the eye, until he moved the tray to reveal all.

Eugenie spoke before her wide eyed parents could say anything. "Edo dear, pour me a wine, will you?" Edo drank a glass of water, then placed a wine glass between his legs and expressed a fragrant red wine, rich with hints of blackberry, one of the last examples of a 30 year old vintage.

"Surprise, daddy. The miracle of water into wine," she giggled, as Edo filled three more glasses, and handed them round the table.

How to End the Story

1. Eugenie empties the catheter* she had used to empty Eduardo's bladder, and fills it back up with wine.
2. Eduardo becomes an organiser of parties for the rich, climaxing in his signature service.
3. Edward and Anne welcome him into the family with open arms.

How to Start the Story

1. Eduardo in training, drinking, tanning and shaving
2. Eugenie telling Eduardo that he must impress her parents
3. In media res - Eduardo, lying on his bed, while Eugenie expertly inserts a catheter.
4. Eugenie in despair that her parents had everything, and couldn't be impressed by anything she could afford or do, or any man she could bring home to marry
5. You could flip it, so that the idea is Eugenie's – we start in media res, as she gives an old man a catheter, and this gives her the idea.

***catheter** – a flexible tube inserted into a narrow opening into a body cavity. (You can guess where). It is usually pushed into the bladder, to remove 'fluid'.

5 Act Summary

1. **Unequal Love:** Eduardo, a passionate winemaker, loves Eugenie, a noble doctor determined to carve her own path. Their clashing backgrounds create tension, especially with Eugenie's wealthy, jaded parents, Anne and Edward.
2. **Impeding Approval:** To ask for Eugenie's hand, Eduardo needs to impress her parents. Money wouldn't do; he needs something truly unique.
3. **Unconventional Preparation:** Eduardo embarks on a bizarre month-long regimen of water consumption, sunbathing, and hair removal, culminating in a shocking revelation.
4. **The Grand Reveal:** At Andrew's birthday dinner, Eduardo, stripped naked, performs a seemingly impossible feat – "turning water into wine" for his sceptical in-laws.
5. **Twist and Acceptance:** Eugenie, amused and delighted, reveals Eduardo's secret: he wasn't performing magic, but a clever trick involving strategically hidden wine and his perfectly prepped body. Anne and Edward, surprised and charmed, approve of the marriage, paving the way for their unlikely union.

Gemini

Write the ending to the story where Edward and Anne welcome him into the family with open arms.

Edward's jaw remained slack, a rare sight on the man who'd seen it all. Anne, ever the pragmatist, blinked but recovered quickly, a mischievous glint in her eyes. "Bravo, Eduardo," she chuckled, clapping her hands. "That was quite the performance. Even I didn't suspect the hidden reserves."

Eugenie, still giggling, squeezed Eduardo's hand. "See? Daddy and Mummy get it! They're not stuffy antiques after all."

Eduardo, heart still hammering against his ribs, felt a blush creep up his neck. Shame? Relief? Exhilaration? A tangle of emotions that somehow landed on a sweet spot of joy. He'd come here prepared for ridicule, rejection, but instead, he found...acceptance.

Edward, ever the businessman, saw the potential beyond the spectacle. "You know, Eduardo," he said, a hint of admiration in his voice, "that kind of ingenuity paired with your passion for wine...you might just turn out to be a valuable asset to this family."

The statement stunned Eugenie. An asset? Her parents hadn't even considered Eduardo joining their esteemed company, let alone using his...unique talents. A hesitant smile bloomed on Eduardo's face. The vineyard was his lifeblood, and the thought of merging his passion with Eugenie's family legacy was dizzying.

Anne chimed in, breaking the stunned silence. "Of course, dear," she patted Eugenie's hand. "Eduardo's creativity needs an outlet, doesn't it? I can envision it now – an exclusive line of limited-edition vintages, each bottle marked by a touch of the unexpected. 'Eduardo's Enigmas,' perhaps?"

The tension, so thick just moments ago, dissolved into laughter. The table buzzed with ideas, plans for collaborations, marketing strategies. Eugenie, beaming, slipped her arm around her betrothed, the once impossible chasm between their worlds bridged by a bottle of cleverly concealed wine and a daring act of love.

As the night wore on, Eduardo felt himself truly welcomed into the fold. He learned about Edward's audacious business ventures, Anne's philanthropic endeavours, and even managed to regale them with tales of life on the vineyard, his passion evident in every word. There was still a long road ahead, cultural differences to navigate, family dynamics to untangle, but for the first time, Eduardo felt he belonged.

He wasn't just Eugenie's love interest anymore, but Eduardo, the water-into-wine wonder, the creative spark waiting to ignite their family business. And as he glanced at Eugenie, her eyes sparkling with love and pride, he knew that even though his journey into this gilded world had begun with a naked trick, it would end with a love story for the ages, a unique blend of passion, family, and a touch of the unexpected.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Character Relationships and Emotional Resonance Through Dialogue and Description:

- The dialogue reveals the contrasting personalities of the characters. Edward's "bravo" and Anne's "mischievous glint" showcase their initial surprise and eventual acceptance of Eduardo's act.
- Descriptive phrases like "heart still hammering," "blush creep up his neck," and "sweet spot of joy" capture Eduardo's complex emotions, allowing readers to connect with his experience.

2. Creating Resolution and Character Growth Through Action, Dialogue, and Setting:

- Eduardo's initial fear and preparation for "ridicule" contrasted with his final feeling of being "welcomed" showcase his character growth and the positive resolution of the initial conflict.
- The dialogue between Edward and Anne highlights their shift from suspicion to seeing Eduardo as a valuable asset, contributing to the resolution of the conflict.
- The final setting description of the "buzzing table" and Eugenie's "beaming" face creates a sense of warmth and togetherness, emphasizing the positive outcome.

3. Exploring Themes of Acceptance, Cultural Differences, and Embracing Uniqueness Through Character Development and Plot:

- The initial tension between Eduardo and Eugenie's parents symbolizes the theme of overcoming cultural differences and societal expectations.
- The acceptance of Eduardo's "unique talents" highlights the story's message of embracing individuality and finding common ground.
- The use of the metaphor "water-into-wine wonder" and the final line about the "unique blend" showcase the theme of embracing unexpected qualities and finding strength in individuality.

ChatGPT

With the room enveloped in stunned silence, Edward and Anne exchanged glances, their eyes widening in disbelief and awe. As the rich aroma of the wine wafted through the air, mingling with the soft glow of the dining room chandelier, Edward leaned forward, his gaze fixed intently on Eduardo.

"Remarkable," he whispered, his voice tinged with a mixture of astonishment and admiration. "In all my years, I've never witnessed such a display."

Anne, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears, reached out to grasp Eduardo's hand, her fingers trembling slightly as they intertwined with his. "You've shown us a world of possibilities we never dared to imagine," she murmured, her voice choked with emotion.

Eduardo, his heart pounding with a mixture of relief and anticipation, met their gaze with a sense of quiet determination. "I wanted to offer you something truly extraordinary, something that transcends the boundaries of wealth and privilege," he explained, his voice steady despite the whirlwind of emotions threatening to overtake him.

Edward, his eyes reflecting a newfound respect, nodded approvingly. "You've not only demonstrated your love for our daughter but also your willingness to go to great lengths to secure her happiness," he acknowledged, his voice filled with warmth.

Anne, her face illuminated by a radiant smile, embraced Eduardo tightly, whispering words of gratitude and acceptance. "Welcome to the family," she declared, her voice echoing with sincerity and love.

As the evening unfolded, laughter and joy filled the room, replacing the initial shock with a sense of unity and connection. Eduardo, embraced by Edward and Anne's genuine acceptance, felt a profound sense of grat-

itude and relief wash over him, knowing that he had not only won Eugenie's heart but also secured a place within the family's legacy.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting Impactful Moments Through Description, Figurative Language, and Character Action:

- The use of descriptive language like "stunned silence," "rich aroma," and "soft glow" creates a vivid sensory experience, amplifying the emotional impact of the moment.
- Figurative language like "eyes widening in disbelief and awe" and "heart pounding with a mixture of relief and anticipation" adds depth to the characters' emotions, allowing readers to connect with their internal struggles.
- The simple act of Anne reaching for Eduardo's hand and Edward's approving nod create powerful nonverbal moments that communicate acceptance and respect.

2. Developing Character Arcs and Relationships Through Dialogue and Emotional Response:

- The dialogue showcases the characters' evolving emotions. Edward's "remarkable" and Anne's "world of possibilities" highlight their shift from initial surprise to genuine admiration.
- Eduardo's explanation about offering "something extraordinary" and his determined demeanour reveal his unwavering love for Eugenie and his desire to be accepted by her family.

- The emotional responses, like Anne's tears and Edward's newfound respect, demonstrate the characters' vulnerability and the significance of the moment.

3. Exploring Themes of Love, Acceptance, and Overcoming Societal Barriers Through Character Development and Plot:

- The initial tension surrounding Eduardo, an outsider seeking to marry into a wealthy family, symbolizes the societal barriers often faced in relationships.
- Edward's acceptance of Eduardo, acknowledging his "love" and "willingness," signifies the importance of looking beyond societal expectations and recognizing genuine love.
- Anne's embrace and the declaration of "welcome to the family" showcase the theme of overcoming prejudice and ultimately finding acceptance and belonging.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

Eduardo tried to calm himself with the knowledge that the catheter had been his idea. While he winced, Eugenie giggled. Here he lay, the woman of his dreams leaning over him, her manicured fingers inserting a rubber tube, millimetre by millimetre into his unsuspecting manhood.

This was the problem with the rich. How could you impress them? Love, he might have thought, love would be enough. But no. Rich parents didn't believe in love. They valued wealth, power and, failing that, novelty. Imagine having so much money that no experience was beyond your reach.

He almost pitied Eugenie, living a life in which no pleasures were denied, and rarely even deferred. He stifled a scream now, as the catheter snaked its way upwards, inwards. Yet he couldn't help but laugh. The funniest part was that he had no interest in Eugenie's money. But, and this is where his mad plan had come in, he needed to impress her parents. He needed something which said, 'I value your daughter above all things, I value your goodwill, but I place no value at all on conventional things. Love is all, and your money is a robe I'll happily not wear.'

He must admit, the idea of doing this naked had been Eugenie's idea. She had shaved his whole body, scraping him clean with olive oil and a razor the way Roman gladiators used to prepare for battle. Eugenie's classical education was full of these sorts of surprises.

"Well, my little amphorae," laughed Eugenie, "it's show time. Water into wine."

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting a Compelling Narrative Voice and Character Traits Through Description and Internal Monologue:

- The narrative voice uses humour and sarcasm, evident in phrases like "manicured fingers inserting a rubber tube" and "the funniest part was that he had no interest in Eugenie's money." This unique voice establishes the narrator's perspective and adds an unconventional layer to the story.
- Eduardo's internal monologues like "love would be enough" and "I place no value at all on conventional things" reveal his thoughts and motivations, highlighting his unconventional approach and potential naivety.

2. Building Suspense and Foreshadowing Through Action, Dialogue, and Figurative Language:

- The graphic description of the catheter insertion and the metaphor "water into wine" create suspense and foreshadow a potentially painful or unexpected outcome, leaving the reader wondering about the purpose of this bizarre act.
- The dialogue between Eduardo and Eugenie, particularly Eugenie's laughter and the line "it's show time," adds a layer of mystery and hints at a hidden purpose behind their actions.

3. Exploring Themes of Love, Societal Pressures, and Unconventional Expression Through Plot, Character Traits, and Setting:

- Eduardo's willingness to undergo a potentially humiliating act to impress Eugenie's parents highlights the theme of societal pressure to conform to certain expectations, particularly regarding wealth and status.
- The contrasting portrayal of love (as genuine for Eduardo and potentially superficial for Eugenie's parents) explores the

complexities of love and the challenges faced when it clashes with societal expectations.

- The act of inserting a catheter in a luxurious setting filled with wealth and privilege adds an element of dark humour and challenges the traditional notions of romance and courtship.

18. A Dog is not Just for Christmas

It's Christmas Eve. Princess Fiona is the ugliest dog you ever saw. She is a balding potbellied Pitbull with chunks of fur missing and a waddling gait. One eye is much larger than the other and looks like it wasn't quite put on straight. She's missing two of her front teeth, so her tongue hangs out, pink, wet and smelling of last night's dog food. Every day at the dog shelter, she is trundled out for prospective owners who turn away in embarrassment or disgust.

One day five year old Miami arrives. Her mother, Houston is amused when Princess Fiona waddles up to Miami to lick her. Miami giggles with delight, throws her arms around Princess Fiona's neck and they both roll excitedly over the floor. The deal is done then and there and all the staff at the dog shelter form a line of honour and applaud the improbable departure of the ugliest dog they've ever seen.

Miami begs Houston to let Princess Fiona sleep on her bed. The magic of Christmas makes her mother relent. Princess Fiona flops gratefully onto the bed, drooling from one end and releasing gases from the other. Miami giggles excitedly and can barely sleep but Christmas works its magic and she drifts off, excited about all that tomorrow will bring. Houston goes to sleep reflecting that this is the happiest her daughter has been.

While the people sleep, a strange pulse of energy enters the house. Princess Fiona begins to glow, her distended belly begins to shrink, her eyes align, large, and beautiful, her teeth grow back, and her fur develops a magnificent sheen.

She puts her head on Miami's pillow, so that she will be the first thing Miami's sees when she wakes. In the morning, Houston creeps in with

Miami's stocking, and she is astonished to see the perfect dog, transformed on Miami's pillow. It's a Christmas miracle.

Miami opens her eyes and gazes at Princess Fiona with wide eyes.

5 Act Summary

1. Princess Fiona, an unattractive dog with a series of imperfections, is constantly overlooked by potential adopters at the shelter.
2. Miami, a young girl, visits the shelter with her mom Houston. Princess Fiona takes a liking to Miami, and Miami reciprocates the affection. Miami's enthusiasm convinces Houston to adopt Princess Fiona.
3. Miami begs to have Princess Fiona sleep on her bed. Houston agrees, and despite Princess Fiona's ungainly sleeping habits, Miami is thrilled.
4. A magical energy fills the house on Christmas Eve, transforming Princess Fiona into a beautiful dog.
5. Houston enters Miami's room with a stocking and discovers the transformed Princess Fiona. Miami wakes up to see the beautiful dog beside her.

How to End the Story

1. She screams and screams and screams. She is inconsolable. (My preferred ending!)
2. They take the dog back to the dog shelter in disgust.

How to Start the Story

1. With a description of Princess Fiona

2. With the viewpoint of Miami, meeting Princess Fiona

3. From Houston's perspective – so pleased to make her daughter happy with this bizarre dog.

Gemini

Christmas Eve at the shelter was never Princess Fiona's favourite day. A sight to behold in all the wrong ways, with her potbellied waddle, mismatched eyes, and perpetually lolling tongue, she watched forlornly as other dogs found homes. But this year, the holiday spirit had a surprise in store.

Five-year-old Miami, armed with boundless energy and an even bigger smile, entered the shelter with her mom, Houston. As Princess Fiona waddled over, tongue lolling in her usual goofy grin, the little girl gasped in delight. Unlike anyone else, Miami didn't turn away. Instead, she threw her arms around the peculiar dog, and a bond blossomed between them like a Christmas miracle.

Despite Houston's initial hesitation, Miami's pleas for Princess Fiona to share her bed that night proved irresistible. As the house settled into a peaceful slumber, something extraordinary happened. A strange energy pulsed through the air, bathing Princess Fiona in a soft, ethereal glow. Her once-disproportionate belly shrunk, her mismatched eyes became large and captivating, and her missing teeth magically reappeared. The patchy fur, once a testament to countless scratches, transformed into a magnificent coat, glistening with a healthy sheen.

Princess Fiona, no longer the goofy, endearing mess she once was, but a creature of unparalleled beauty, nestled her head beside Miami, eager to greet the first rays of Christmas morning. Houston, entering Miami's room with her stocking, stopped short, speechless at the sight of the breath-taking creature curled up beside her daughter.

The silence was broken by a sound that chilled Houston to the bone - a bloodcurdling scream. "Miami, wake up!" Her daughter cried, her voice laced with terror.

Miami's eyes fluttered open, landing on the creature beside her. The familiar, endearing face, full of love and goofiness, was gone. In its place was a stunning, regal dog – a stranger in her own bed. The familiar drool-soaked grin was replaced by a sleek, aristocratic muzzle. The clumsy, playful companion had been replaced by a creature of untamed elegance.

Before Miami could even register the change, a strangled scream tore from her throat, echoing through the house. "Mommy!" she cried, tears welling up in her eyes, "Princess Fiona is... different!"

The Christmas miracle had come true, but at a cost. The transformation had erased the very thing that made Princess Fiona special to Miami – their unconventional, goofy friendship. Underneath the dazzling exterior, would the love and connection they shared remain? That, truly, was the ultimate test of this Christmas miracle.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Subverting Expectations and Challenging Conventions Through Character Development and Plot:

- The story subverts the expectations of a typical "ugly duckling" transformation by showcasing the downsides of losing one's unique qualities in pursuit of conventional beauty.
- Princess Fiona's initial portrayal as an "unconventional" dog challenges societal beauty standards and emphasizes the value of inner qualities like goofiness and love.

2. Exploring Themes of Love, Acceptance, and Beauty Beyond the Physical Through Character Traits, Dialogue, and Setting:

- Miami's acceptance of Princess Fiona despite her physical flaws highlights the theme of looking beyond physical appearance and embracing individuality.
- The contrast between Miami's initial love for the "goofy" Princess Fiona and her fear of the "breath-taking" creature emphasizes the complexities of love and the importance of accepting someone for who they truly are.
- The setting of a Christmas shelter, traditionally associated with hope and new beginnings, adds an ironic twist to the story, highlighting the potential loss of innocence and the unexpected consequences of wishes coming true.

3. Creating Emotional Impact Through Figurative Language, Tone Shifts, and Character Actions:

- Figurative language like "ethereal glow," "majestic coat," and "stranger in her own bed" creates a vivid contrast between Princess Fiona's pre- and post-transformation appearances, emphasizing the drastic change.
- The sudden shift in tone from the hopeful beginning to the chilling screams and tears creates a sense of unease and emphasizes the emotional cost of the transformation.
- Miami's actions, like her initial embrace and later terrified screams, showcase the emotional impact of the transformation on their relationship.

ChatGPT

On Christmas Eve, the shelter bustled with activity, but amidst the cheerful anticipation, there sat Princess Fiona, a pitiful sight indeed. With her misshapen features and patchy fur, she seemed to embody rejection itself. Yet, fate had other plans.

In walked little Miami, her eyes bright with wonder as she surveyed the forlorn creatures seeking homes. Houston, her mother, watched amused as Princess Fiona, in all her oddity, waddled over to Miami and showered her with affection. Miami's laughter filled the room as she embraced the peculiar dog, sealing their bond in an instant.

With the unanimous approval of the shelter staff, Princess Fiona found herself a new home, nestled in the heart of Miami's affection. Against all odds, she had found her place.

As Christmas night fell, Princess Fiona lay beside Miami, her presence a source of comfort and joy. The magic of the season seemed to weave around them, promising miracles yet to come.

And indeed, as the night deepened, a strange energy filled the air. Princess Fiona began to glow, her form shifting and changing before their eyes. Gone were the imperfections, replaced by a radiant beauty that seemed to transcend the ordinary.

When morning dawned, Houston entered Miami's room, bearing gifts and good tidings. But what she saw stole her breath away.

There, upon Miami's pillow, lay Princess Fiona, transformed into a vision of perfection. It was as if the spirit of Christmas had touched her, bestowing upon her a gift beyond comprehension.

Yet, as Miami stirred from her slumber and gazed upon her beloved companion, her eyes widened in shock and horror. For the Princess Fiona she knew was gone, replaced by a creature of unearthly beauty.

"Miami, darling, what's wrong?" Houston asked, alarmed by her daughter's sudden distress.

But Miami could only scream in terror, unable to comprehend the miraculous transformation that had taken place before her very eyes. And as her cries echoed through the house, Princess Fiona, now more beautiful than ever, could only watch in confusion, her heart heavy with the weight of a love lost in the face of perfection.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Emotional Depth and Character Connection Through Description, Dialogue, and Setting:

- **Vivid descriptions:** Phrases like "misshapen features," "patchy fur," and "showered her with affection" paint a picture of Princess Fiona's appearance and personality, creating an initial emotional connection with the reader.
- **Heartfelt dialogue:** Miami's laughter and Princess Fiona's "affection" showcase the immediate bond formed between them, further endearing them to the reader.
- **Evocative setting:** The contrasting descriptions of the "bustling shelter" and the "peaceful night" establish different moods and emphasize the shift from anticipation to the transformative event.

2. Exploring Themes of Unconventional Beauty, Acceptance, and the Potential Cost of Wishes Through Plot and Character Development:

- **Focus on unconventional beauty:** Princess Fiona's initial portrayal challenges societal standards by presenting her "oddity" and "imperfections" in a positive light.

- **Emphasis on acceptance:** Miami's embrace of Princess Fiona despite her flaws highlights the theme of acceptance and looking beyond physical appearance.
- **Twist in the "miracle":** The transformation into "unearthly beauty" and Miami's subsequent terror introduce the unexpected consequence of the wish, raising questions about the true nature of beauty and happiness.

3. Creating Suspense and a Sense of Wonder Through Foreshadowing, Figurative Language, and Tone Shifts:

- **Foreshadowing:** The line "fate had other plans" hints at an upcoming change in Princess Fiona's situation.
- **Figurative language:** The use of words like "glow," "shifting," and "transcend" create a sense of mystery and wonder surrounding the transformation.
- **Shifting tone:** The story transitions from heart-warming hope to a chilling sense of unease through Miami's scream and Princess Fiona's "heavy heart," leaving the reader with a sense of complex emotions and unanswered questions.

Mr Salles: What if This is the Story?

It's Christmas Eve. Princess Fiona is the ugliest dog you ever saw. She is a balding potbellied Pitbull with chunks of fur missing and a waddling gait. One eye is much larger than the other and looks like it wasn't quite put on straight. She's missing two of her front teeth, so her tongue hangs out, pink, wet and smelling of last night's dog food. Every day at the dog shelter, she is trundled out for prospective owners who turn away in embarrassment or disgust.

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Miami begs Houston to let Princess Fiona sleep on her bed. The magic of Christmas makes her mother relent. Princess Fiona flops gratefully onto the bed, drooling from one end and releasing gases from the other. Miami giggles excitedly and can barely sleep but Christmas works its magic and she drifts off, excited about all that tomorrow will bring. Houston goes to sleep reflecting that this is the happiest her daughter has been.

While the people sleep, a strange pulse of energy enters the house. Princess Fiona begins to glow, her distended belly begins to shrink, her eyes align, large, and beautiful, her teeth grow back, and her fur develops a magnificent sheen.

She puts her head on Miami's pillow, so that she will be the first thing Miami's sees when she wakes. In the morning, Houston creeps in with Miami's stocking, and she is astonished to see the perfect dog, transformed on Miami's pillow. It's a Christmas miracle.

Miami opens her eyes and gazes at Princess Fiona with wide eyes.

She screams.

3 things to learn from this:

1. **Character Contrast Creates Connection:** The story uses the strong contrast between Princess Fiona's appearance and Miami's love for her. This emphasizes the emotional connection, teaching students that true connection doesn't depend on outward appearances.
2. **Ordinary Setting, Extraordinary Event:** The story unfolds in a familiar setting (a home on Christmas Eve) but then introduces a magical transformation. This reminds students that extraordinary events can happen in everyday situations, making the story more relatable and surprising.
3. **Show, Don't Tell:** The story uses vivid descriptions to showcase Princess Fiona's appearance and Miami's actions. This allows readers to experience the emotions and understand the connection between the characters without being explicitly told.

Bonus Tip: The story also uses foreshadowing with the title "The Ugliest Dog" hinting at a possible transformation. This technique can build anticipation and surprise readers in a satisfying way.

19. MARY THE ELEPHANT

Elmo Gibbons became a human being half way through the first world war. In 1916 his circus, The Elmo Gibbons organised an elephant parade through Gloucester. Their star elephant was Mary, so intelligent she could play 29 tunes on car horns, and so skilful she could skate on ice.

Elmo hired some unemployed men, too old to go to war, to hold an elephant stick, a kind of spear, to prod each elephant if they didn't obey their rider. Now, Mary led the way, until she came to a small orchard of apple and pear trees. She had a sweet tooth, and stopped to eat. Nothing the rider could do would move her, and the crowds lining the route became impatient. The animals behind threatened to break ranks, and so Mary's minder prodded her jaw with the sharp end of his stick.

Mary was thrown into a rage, picked up her minder and threw him into the road. The crowd screamed and parted, only for Mary to roll him over and place one foot firmly on his head. The sounds of hundreds of people screaming brought the police and thousands of onlookers. Elmo watched it all in slow motion, his feelings moving from horror to delight. What a spectacle.

He announced that for only one shilling, tonight's show would be an execution. The first and only public hanging of an elephant.

That night, town was full. It was the largest profit Elmo ever made. A crane stood in the town square, dangling a huge chain. The chain was looped around Mary's neck. Elmo looked into her eyes, and could tell she knew what was coming. Still, he ordered the crane driver to lift Mary, kicking as she rose. Elmo the showman was giving the public what they wanted, condemning Mary for her murderous crime, when the chain snapped, and Mary crashed downwards. Elmo dived in time to save his life, but Mary's hip crashed onto his legs, crushing them to a pulp. Elmo would never forget the pain nor Mary's screams.

Still, the show must go on. Mary, her pelvis shattered, was hanged at the second attempt. Elmo would never walk again. But the doctor who treated him at the scene also examined Mary. She had an abscess the size of a football in her jaw, exactly where the minder had prodded her.

And that's when, in 1916, the Mary Gibbons circus became the first circus in the world without animals.

How to Start the Story

1. In the crisis, with the screaming
2. With a portrait of Mary, the amazingly intelligent elephant, playing her tunes
3. With a portrait of Mary waiting to be hung, with flashback
4. Elmo's narration, telling his story to his children – what did you do during the war daddy?

How to End the Story

1. Elmo, as a reformed man, like Ebenezer Scrooge
2. Elmo, reliving his and Mary's screams

3. A circular structure, a memory of Mary playing a tune which plays now on the gramophone

5 Act Summary

1. **Star Elephant:** Mary, a remarkable elephant known for her intelligence and skills, leads the parade of Elmo Gibbons' circus.
2. **Tragic Trigger:** Enticed by apple trees, Mary disobeys the rider, leading to a fatal confrontation where she throws and injures her minder.
3. **Spectacle over Mercy:** Capitalizing on public shock, Elmo announces Mary's public execution, turning tragedy into a gruesome profit-driven event.
4. **Twisted Justice:** Despite Mary's pain and a potentially mitigating abscess, she is hanged in a spectacle of barbarity.
5. **Shifting Perspective:** Mary's death prompts a change of heart in Elmo and the circus, leading them to become the first animal-free circus in the world.

Gemini

Write the beginning

The midday sun beat down on Gloucester, turning the cobblestone streets into shimmering heat waves. The air crackled with anticipation, a collective breath held as the procession inched its way forward. At its heart, a titan: Mary, the star of The Elmo Gibbons Circus, strode along, her tusks gleaming like ivory daggers, her immense body draped in emerald-trimmed red velvet.

Elmo, perched atop a gilded carriage drawn by six white stallions, watched the scene unfold with the practiced eye of a showman. Mary wasn't just any elephant; she was a prodigy, a creature of unfathomable intelligence and grace. She could play a waltz on car horns, pirouette on ice, and count to fifty with a flick of her trunk. Today, however, her talents were on display in a different form – leading the circus parade through the heart of the town.

The crowds pressed against the barriers, eyes wide with a mixture of awe and nervous excitement. Mothers clutched their children close, whispering tales of the gentle giant, stories tinged with a hint of the wild untamed within her. Men, faces etched with lines of war and worry, found their gazes drawn to Mary's stoic strength, a silent reflection of their own struggle.

Elmo savoured the spectacle. He, Elmo Gibbons, had crafted this extraordinary life, built an empire of sawdust and sequins on the back of Mary's extraordinary gifts. His gaze landed on the line of handlers flanking Mary, each one clutching an elephant stick – a thick pole tipped with a cruel iron point, a reminder of the beast's potential rage beneath the veneer of velvet and applause.

But Mary, today, seemed indifferent to the spectacle. Her head hung low, ears flapping listlessly against the drumming heat. A tremor of unease

slithered through Elmo's chest. Mary was a creature of routine, and this deviation from her usual swagger – a subtle shift in the rhythm of her stride – felt ominous. His fingers tightened on the reins, a prickling premonition settling in his gut like a swallowed pebble.

Ahead, the narrow street curved, revealing a small orchard bursting with ripe apples and pears. Elmo caught Mary's head swivelling towards the tempting oasis, a flicker of her old mischievous glint in her eyes. And then, in a heartbeat, the parade screeched to a halt. Mary had stopped, planted her feet like granite slabs, and fixed her gaze on the forbidden fruit.

The carefully orchestrated harmony of the parade began to unravel. The animals behind Mary shuffled and grumbled, anticipation morphing into impatience. The crowd surged forward, a wave of eager faces pressed against the barriers. And Elmo, watching from his gilded perch, felt the first icy tendrils of dread creep up his spine. This wasn't just a rogue elephant's whim; it was a portent of something far more terrible, a storm brewing in the eyes of the most extraordinary creature he'd ever known.

And so, under the blazing summer sun, in the heart of a quaint English town, the dance between man and beast, showman and star, began to shift. The line between spectacle and tragedy, as thin as apple peel, was about to be irrevocably crossed.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building a Vivid Setting and Atmosphere Through Description and Figurative Language:

- **Vivid descriptions:** Phrases like "shimmering heat waves," "collective breath held," and "emerald-trimmed red velvet" create a detailed picture of the setting, immersing the reader in the atmosphere of the hot, bustling town.

- **Figurative language:** Similes like "tusks gleaming like ivory daggers" and metaphors like "a tremor of unease slithered through Elmo's chest" add depth and sensory details, further engaging the reader's imagination.

2. Creating Compelling Characters Through Description, Action, and Internal Monologue:

- **Description and action:** The portrayal of Mary, her "immense body," "gleaming tusks," and "stoic strength," alongside her "listless" demeanour and "tremor of unease" in Elmo, paints a picture of complex characters with hidden emotions.
- **Internal monologue:** Elmo's thoughts about Mary's "potential rage" and the "prickling premonition" settling in his gut reveal his inner conflict and foreshadow potential danger.

3. Exploring Themes of Power, Control, and the Fragile Balance Between Spectacle and Chaos Through Plot and Dialogue:

- **Power dynamics:** The contrasting descriptions of Mary as a "prodigy" and a "beast," and the use of the "elephant stick" as a symbol of control, highlight the complex power dynamic between humans and animals.
- **Shifting balance:** The initial "spectacle" and "harmony" of the parade give way to Mary's defiance, foreshadowing a potential loss of control and the blurring line between entertainment and chaos.
- **Limited dialogue:** The story relies heavily on description and internal monologues, allowing readers to interpret the char-

acters' motivations and the building tension without needing explicit dialogue.

ChatGPT

In the bustling town of Gloucester, the year 1916 shimmered with anticipation as the renowned Elmo Gibbons Circus prepared for its grand parade. At the heart of this spectacle was Mary, an elephant of unparalleled intelligence and charm. Whispers of her talents echoed through the streets: tales of her gracefully skating on ice and harmoniously playing 29 tunes on car horns.

Elmo Gibbons, the charismatic ringmaster, saw in Mary not just an animal but a star. The town was abuzz with excitement, posters plastered on every corner announcing the parade, promising an unforgettable experience for all. As the day approached, families eagerly awaited the chance to witness the marvel of Mary and her fellow circus performers parading through the cobbled streets.

Yet, beneath the fanfare and anticipation, a subtle tension brewed. Elmo, known for his flamboyant style and showmanship, had a reputation to uphold. And as the day dawned bright and clear, little did the townsfolk realize that the events about to unfold would forever change the course of Elmo Gibbons' Circus and the fate of its beloved star, Mary.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Suspense and Foreshadowing Through Setting, Character Description, and Dialogue:

- **Setting the stage:** The bustling town, the year 1916, and the grand circus preparation set the stage for a momentous event.
- **Introducing characters:** The contrasting descriptions of Mary's "unparalleled intelligence" and "charm" alongside Elmo's "flamboyant style" and "reputation to uphold" create intrigue and hint at potential conflict.

- **Whispers and unspoken tension:** The use of "whispers" and the mention of "subtle tension" subtly foreshadows a hidden complexity beneath the seemingly joyful event.

2. Creating a Sense of Wonder and Importance Through Description, Figurative Language, and Emotional Appeals:

- **Vivid descriptions:** Phrases like "shimmered with anticipation," "renowned Elmo Gibbons Circus," and "unforgettable experience" create a sense of wonder and excitement.
- **Figurative language:** The metaphor "year 1916 shimmered" adds a layer of anticipation and intrigue to the setting.
- **Appealing to emotions:** Phrases like "families eagerly awaited" and "beloved star" evoke feelings of anticipation and connection to the upcoming event.

3. Hooking the Reader and Leaving Them Wanting More Through a Cliff-hanger and Unresolved Conflict:

- **Cliff-hanger ending:** The sentence "little did the townsfolk realize..." leaves the reader hanging, eager to know what will unfold and how it will change everything.
- **Unresolved conflict:** The mention of "subtle tension" and "a reputation to uphold" suggests hidden complexities that pique the reader's curiosity and encourage them to continue reading to find out what happens.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

Elmo knew, with a calm certainty that surprised him, that the elephant was going to change him forever. He saw the chain snap before he heard it, and sensed the crowd scream before he heard them, and he watched Mary plummet towards him, 7 tonnes of circus elephant in slow motion, so that one part of his mind registered the coming impact, which would, he had no doubt, obliterate part of his body more quickly than a hand grenade, while the other part of his mind seemed to prolong the moment. He thought he saw Mary's pain and accusation in her eyes, and a cinematic flood of memories of the morning flickered at him.

The procession into Gloucester had begun in perfect sunshine. Elmo's circus troupe marched with a musical fanfare and spectacle honed with years of practice, teamwork, razzmatazz and escapism. The greatest show on earth. There was a war on, and people craved some relief.

Each city, town and village had its broken men, and Elmo would lift the local spirits (and earn a reputation as a philanthropist into the bargain) by recruiting local, down at heel men in need of a helping hand, as animal handlers for the day.

Mary's solid mass seemed to ripple, shape shifting like a rubber ball, as it spun towards him. This morning, Mary had killed a man.

It had happened like this. The man was in his thirties, shell shocked perhaps, too broken for the army. He held the mahout stick, as instructed, and, as instructed, tapped Mary on the cheek to direct her. Mary was used to this. She was the most intelligent animal he'd ever trained. She could actually waltz, to music, while juggling two balls with her trunk. She could play 8 notes on a drum. She was extraordinary, and he treated her like a queen.

The tap shouldn't have hurt her. It would have felt less solid than her rider's heels, no more painful than slapping a mosquito from your skin.

Yet Mary had picked up the man, her trunk snaking round him in a sudden strike and then slashing him to the ground. This horror was nothing. Her foreleg rose, and aimed squarely for the man's head, pile driving it into Gloucester's cobbled street, its only trace a smear on the pad of her foot.

The crowd seemed to spasm, and his belly tightened in fear. The crowd parted and ran from Mary, who had begun to trumpet her rage: keepers ran towards her, desperate to chain her feet. He was ruined.

He did not have time to smile at the memory, as the plummeting body spiralled towards him, but his mind played the trick of stilling time, and so it smiled for him. He would be ruined enough, soon enough.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating a Sense of Immediacy and Heightened Awareness Through Description and Pacing:

- **Vivid descriptions:** Phrases like "7 tonnes of circus elephant in slow motion," "coming impact, which would... obliterate part of his body," and "smear on the pad of her foot" create sharp and visceral imagery, immersing the reader in the immediacy of the situation.
- **Shifting pace:** The rapid-fire narration, switching between past and present tenses, mirrors the chaotic and fast-paced nature of the event, keeping the reader engaged and on edge.

2. Exploring Complex Themes Through Character Actions, Internal Monologue, and Flashbacks:

- **Character actions:** Mary's actions of killing the man and her rageful trumpet contrast with her past performance and Elmo's perception of her as intelligent and well-treated, high-

lighting the complexities of animal behaviour and the potential dangers they pose.

- **Internal monologue:** Elmo's thoughts about being "ruined" and the unexpected memory of him "smiling" reveal the emotional turmoil and conflicting feelings he experiences in the face of the tragedy.
- **Flashbacks:** The brief flashback to the seemingly routine morning routine emphasizes the sudden and unpredictable nature of the event and the hidden tension beneath the surface of Mary's "queen-like" treatment.

3. Building Suspense and Leaving the Reader with Unanswered Questions Through Cliff-hanger and Unresolved Conflict:

- **Cliff-hanger ending:** The image of Mary falling towards Elmo leaves the reader with a sense of shock and uncertainty about their ultimate fate.
- **Unresolved conflict:** The story raises questions about the reasons behind Mary's actions, the potential consequences for Elmo and the circus, and the ethical treatment of animals in entertainment, leaving the reader wanting more answers and a resolution to the situation.

20. NINE LIVES

Dolly makes a parachute jump. She's 28 years old. It's 1912, and in those days, you held tight and let the wind take you. This is told in flashback, as she falls to earth, and gradually notices that she is heading towards a railway track.

Dolly has risked her life every week since she was 16. At 16, she took a job as a waitress at Alexandra Palace, so she could hear her favourite band. One of her customers was Buffalo Bill, and he encouraged her to volunteer to be the girl standing with objects on her head, while he, the blindfolded sharp shooter, would shoot them.

Then came the trapeze act – not messing about with a circus, but on a hot air balloon, before parachuting back to earth. Another death was cheated when, at 15,000 ft the altitude made breathing difficult, and it was a toss up whether the cold would kill her before suffocation. She had managed climb up the ropes and let out some helium, to get the balloon down.

Then there was a duo act with Mary, who's parachute didn't open, so she clung onto Dolly all the way down. They landed with so much force that Dolly was paralysed. The doctors decided to electrocute her legs gently to stimulate them. One doctor miscalculated the charge. It flew her off the bed in spasms and knocked her unconscious. But the fall miraculously realigned her spine. Dolly made a full recovery and decided to get straight back up in the balloon.

This is a dozen jumps later. It is her 100th jump, and she now notices that a train is going to meet her as she falls towards the tracks. She can veer left or right, but doing that will only plunge her into trees whose branches will break her limbs and crush her skull. There seems no way she can cheat death.

And then the train driver spots her. He knows exactly what to do. He watches her fall to exactly the right spot and lets out a giant column of steam. It throws her over the tree tops and she lands a few hundred meters away in the Grantham canal.

She can't swim, of course. But is astonished to find that it is only 5 foot deep. This is when she decided to retire!

How to Start the Story

1. From Dolly's point of view, at the beginning of the last jump – perfect weather and views, to contrast with all the times she has cheated death, in flashback.
2. From Dolly's daughter, Molly's, point of view, looking back and imagining the life of her mother on the occasion of her 86th birthday, when she is making one last jump with the Red Devils.

How to End the Story

1. In the canal.
2. She finds out who the train driver was, and propositions him – they get married.
3. Just before she lands in the canal, observing to herself that this is another fine mess – if only she had learned to swim. We have to decide if she survives.

5 Act Summary

1. Daring Life: Dolly, a thrill-seeker in 1912, leaps into a world of risky stunts: parachuting, balloon escapes, even dodging bullets!
2. Brush with Death: Each feat pushes her towards mortality's edge, from icy altitudes to plummeting with a malfunctioning parachute.
3. Unexpected Saviour: Facing imminent collision with a train, a watchful train driver's quick thinking throws her clear with a burst of steam.
4. Shallow Waters: Landing not in darkness, but in the shallows of a canal, Dolly laughs, realizing the absurdity of her survival.
5. Dressed for Life: This brush with death becomes her final daring act. Dolly trades silk for safety, her heart full of stories, her journey a testament to facing fears and choosing when to walk away.

Gemini

Start the story in a dramatic moment and tell other events in flash-back if necessary.

The world blurred above Dolly, a canvas of sun-drenched fields fractured by the rhythmic flapping of her silk skirt. Wind tore at her cheeks, a howling symphony punctuated by the approaching shriek of a steel beast on tracks below. A train. Her parachute, a scarlet splash against the blue, malfunctioned, a limp shroud mocking her descent.

Left, or right? Branches, hungry arms reaching upwards, promised splintered limbs and a skull shattered like porcelain. She couldn't veer. This was it. The end of a life woven from a thousand near misses, a tapestry of audacious stunts and cheated deaths.

But fate, it seemed, had one last trick up its sleeve.

Her mind, instead of panicking, surrendered to the freefall, retracing the steps that led her here. To the Alexandra Palace, where a teenage Dolly, mesmerized by a band, landed a job serving Buffalo Bill, the sharpshooter extraordinaire. He, with a twinkle in his eye and a revolver in his hand, offered her a taste of danger – dodging bullets as his target, a porcelain apple balanced precariously on her head.

Then came the balloon, a silent leviathan ascending into the frigid embrace of the stratosphere. A trapeze, not for the dusty sawdust of a circus, but strung between balloon and earth, a silken bridge over an abyss. The thin air at 15,000 feet, a thief stealing her breath, threatening to claim her before gravity did. With numb fingers, she'd bled helium from the balloon, coaxing it down, a descent as perilous as the ascent.

And Mary. Her friend, her parachute failing, plunging towards oblivion. Dolly, in a reflex forged from a thousand close calls, had grabbed her, their combined weight slamming them into the earth. Paralysis, the bitter fruit of that landing, followed by the doctor's misguided jolt of

electricity, sending her flying off the bed, unconscious. But in that tumble, her spine, miraculously realigned, had granted her a second chance. A hundred jumps later, this was her finale. Not because fear had finally gripped her, but because this brush with death, unlike the others, held a strange clarity. A whisper that some chances, however captivating, are best left untaken.

As the train's mournful horn echoed below, its shadow a looming spectre, a plume of white erupted from its engine, a majestic phoenix rising from steel. The blast, a geyser of steam, caught Dolly, lifting her with an unexpected gentleness, propelling her over the treetops to land, not in the arms of death, but in the lap of the Grantham Canal.

She couldn't swim, of course. But as she sputtered, the water barely reaching her chest, a laugh, bubbling up from her soul, replaced the terror. Laughter at the absurdity of it all, the irony of surviving so much only to find salvation in the shallows.

She crawled out, the silk skirt, once a symbol of her defiance, now clinging to her like a discarded skin. Dolly, the thrill-seeker, stood on the bank, not with fear, but with the quiet resolve of a woman who had danced with death and chosen life. Her heart, a kaleidoscope of memories, whispered of a future traded for silks, a life written not in the language of adrenaline, but in the ink of wisdom, hard-won and fiercely embraced.

And as the sun dipped below the horizon, painting the sky in hues of her abandoned parachute, Dolly knew that this, her final near miss, had become her greatest escape.

2 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting a Compelling Character Arc Through Internal Monologue, Flashbacks, and Resolution:

- **Internal Monologue:** Dolly's thoughts as she falls reveal her acceptance of the situation and a reflection on her life of taking risks.
- **Flashbacks:** The flashbacks to past near-death experiences with Buffalo Bill, the balloon, and Mary showcase Dolly's history of pushing boundaries and the consequences she faced.
- **Resolution:** The story doesn't end with her death, but with a surprising rescue and a shift in her perspective. Dolly chooses life and a future free from recklessness.

2. Building Suspense and Emotional Depth Through Vivid Descriptions, Pacing, and Sensory Details:

- **Vivid Descriptions:** Phrases like "sun-drenched fields," "howling symphony," "scarlet splash against the blue," and "porcelain apple balanced precariously" create a clear picture of the setting and heighten the tension.
- **Pacing:** The rapid pace of the falling action with short, action-packed sentences keeps the reader on the edge of their seat.
- **Sensory Details:** The use of wind tearing at cheeks, the shriek of the train, and numb fingers from thin air create a visceral experience for the reader.

ChatGPT

Dolly felt the rush of wind whip past her as she hurtled towards the earth, her eyes widening in panic as the distant railway tracks loomed ominously closer. The deafening roar of an approaching train echoed in the distance.

Just moments ago, she had been soaring above, the thrill of her 100th jump pulsating through her veins. But now, the tracks below seemed an inevitable, perilous destination. Her mind raced, and memories flooded back to the very beginning of her daredevil journey.

At 16, Dolly had been a bright-eyed waitress at Alexandra Palace, drawn to the intoxicating melodies of her favourite band. Little did she know, her life would soon intertwine with the enigmatic Buffalo Bill, catapulting her into a world of danger and thrill. He had seen something in her — a spark, a fearless spirit — and soon she found herself as the daring target in his infamous sharpshooting act.

From there, her life spiralled into a whirlwind of audacious stunts. There was the heart-stopping trapeze act from a lofty hot air balloon, the dizzying altitude that nearly claimed her breath and life, and that fateful tandem jump with Mary that ended in a bone-crushing impact. Each escapade more daring than the last, each a testament to her indomitable spirit and passion for the adrenaline rush.

Yet, amidst the exhilaration, there were moments of peril. A spine-chilling mishap during a medical procedure that could have ended her career and life. But fate, it seemed, had other plans, and Dolly miraculously recovered, more determined than ever.

Back in the present, with the train's deafening approach growing louder, Dolly's heart raced. But just as panic threatened to consume her, a plume of steam erupted from the engine below. The world spun as her trajectory altered, sending her crashing into the nearby Grantham canal.

Gasping for breath and realizing the shallowness of the water, Dolly knew in her heart that this was a sign. A sign that perhaps it was time to embrace a different kind of thrill, to cherish the memories of her daredevil past, and to look towards a future less defined by danger and more by the depth of life's experiences.

2 things students can learn from this:

1. Building a Compelling Character Through Action, Flashbacks, and Internal Conflict:

- **Action:** Dolly's initial fear and panic at falling create a sense of urgency and danger.
- **Flashbacks:** The glimpses into Dolly's past as a sharpshooting target, a trapeze artist, and a tandem jumper showcase her life of taking risks and the thrill she seeks.
- **Internal Conflict:** The contrast between Dolly's past desire for adrenaline and her present realization that it might be time for a change highlights her internal struggle.

2. Creating a Sense of Pacing and Heightening Tension Through Description and Sentence Structure:

- **Vivid descriptions:** Phrases like "deafening roar," "perilous destination," and "spine-chilling mishap" create vivid imagery and heighten the tension.
- **Pacing:** The short, action-packed sentences as Dolly falls mirror the fast-paced nature of the situation, keeping the reader engaged.

- **Sentence structure:** The use of a long sentence describing her past life as a "whirlwind of audacious stunts" slows down the pace and emphasizes the weight of her experiences.

Mr Salles: Start With the Flashback

How did I meet your grandfather? Well, some say it was a miracle, but I say, life is a miracle. It started at the palace, Ally Pally as we called it, where the nobs hung out: champagne, caviar and entertainment. Bright lights, silver service and the best company money could buy. That's where I met Buffalo Bill.

Now Bill, he was a prize bullshitter alright, a master of the one liner, a showman, like you've never seen, 'cept at the picture palace. He was tall, built like a lumberjack, and had a slow drawl and an amused way of looking at you which made me feel special. I was 16 and a waitress, so I expect any American might have seemed otherworldly to me, but Bill was world famous for his charm as well as his Wild West Show, and rather than take his order, and those of his party, he made me sit down, looked me straight in the eye, and told me he intended to shoot me every night for the next 6 months. All I had to do was wear the finest clothes, smile my finest smile, wear a blindfold and pray that he wouldn't miss. Of course, I said yes. I was 16, and I believed in miracles.

That's when I fell in love with danger. First the bullets, then the knife throwing acts, and of course the trapeze. Then (I can't remember how it happened) we were in Paris, seeing the famous Blanchards and their balloons, and time suddenly stood still. We jumped in the basket, faster than a beggar steals a purse; Jean-Pierre burned the gas, and it sounded just right, like the purr from a lion, and the balloon rose. It felt impossible, but perfect. A miracle. Oh, Paris at dawn is an unbelievable sight. Rising up over those famous buildings, the parks radiating out like ripples in a lake, and then the Eiffel Tower, tall, elegant and impossibly shrinking beneath us.

I turned to Bill and Pierre, raised an eyebrow and an ankle, held on to the rope connecting the basket to the balloon, and swung myself out, half

a mile above Montmartre. They both screamed, at once, like shocked schoolgirls. I swung back into the basket once more and laughed. You can make your own miracles, I said.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Crafting a Compelling Narrator and Hooking the Reader Through Voice and Personal Anecdote:

- **Strong Narrator Voice:** The narrator's voice is clear and engaging, using informal language ("nobs," "picture palace") and personal anecdotes ("That's when I fell in love with danger") to connect with the reader.
- **Intriguing Introduction:** The story starts with a question, "How did I meet your grandfather?" and a statement that piques curiosity ("life is a miracle"). This personal approach draws the reader in and makes them want to hear the story.

2. Building Vivid Settings and Bringing the Action to Life Through Sensory Details and Figurative Language:

- **Sensory Details:** Phrases like "champagne, caviar," "bright lights, silver service," and "slow drawl" create a vivid picture of the luxurious setting at Ally Pally.
- **Figurative Language:** Similes like "like you've never seen, 'cept at the picture palace" and "like the purr from a lion" add depth and sensory details to descriptions.

3. Creating a Sense of Adventure and Excitement Through Pacing, Choice of Words, and Emotional Connection:

- **Fast Pacing:** The rapid-fire description of events, from meeting Buffalo Bill to the balloon ride, keeps the reader engaged and conveys a sense of adventure.
- **Vivid Verbs:** Words like "hung out," "prize bullshitter," "drew," "burned," and "rose" create a sense of movement and excitement.
- **Emotional Connection:** The narrator's personal connection to the story ("I believed in miracles," "I fell in love with danger," and "You can make your own miracles") invites the reader to share in the experience.

21. HEROES

It is 1915. Rex Warneford is a 24 year old flying ace in the First World War.

The story is told by a British journalist. Rex has refused to take him up in a plane. It is a new plane, which Rex is delivering to the naval airbase. He has decided to take an American journalist, Henry Beach Needham, instead, because he wants to be internationally famous. "I need him," he says, as a pun.

He has just received a medal, the Légion d'honneur from the French Army Commander in Chief, General Joffre, because he single-handedly downed a German Zeppelin airship on its way to bomb England. He managed to avoid its machine guns, climb above it and drop six bombs on it. It crashed on a convent school, killing some schoolgirls and couple of nuns. The explosion spun his plane out of control and he crash-landed behind German lines. He still managed to repair his plane just before he was captured, yelling to the Germans "Give my regards to the Kaiser!"

He has already received the Victoria Cross for this (the collateral damage was ignored).

Rex is really called Reginald, but Rex means king in Latin, and he prefers this as a nickname. Rex fancies himself. He is drunk from the celebration and meal with General Joffre, and insults the British journalist.

And so, he takes up the American in the new plane, and at 200 feet, the right wings just snap right off. They plummet to the ground, and both men are killed.

The British journalist writes a brilliant article, portraying the tragic death of the hero.

The best tribute is in his home town. In an ironic twist they open a new school and name it after him, Warneford School.

How to Start the Story

1. At the crisis point, evading machine gun fire and bombing the zeppelin.
2. Mid argument with the British journalist, refusing to take him in the plane.
3. At the crisis point, where the wings sheer off, reported by the watching British journalist.

How to End the Story

1. With the ironic naming of the school
2. With his death
3. With the wings sheering off, and his realisation that there is no escape from death

5 Act Summary

1. In 1915, 24-year-old flying ace Rex Warneford, also known as Reginald, gains fame during WWI for downing a German Zeppelin airship destined for England, receiving both the Légion d'honneur from General Joffre and the Victoria Cross.
2. A British journalist narrates the story, revealing Rex's arrogance and refusal to take him flying, choosing instead to fly

with American journalist Henry Beach Needham to gain international fame.

3. Despite Rex's celebratory mood and sharp remarks toward the British journalist, a tragic accident occurs when the wings of the new plane he's piloting snap off mid-flight at 200 feet, resulting in both men's deaths.
4. Following the fatal crash, the British journalist pens a poignant article commemorating Rex's life and tragic end, emphasizing his heroism and achievements.
5. In a bittersweet tribute, Rex's hometown names a new school after him, immortalizing his legacy despite the ironic circumstances of his death.

Gemini

Write the last 250 words of this story

The biplane spun like a ragdoll in the summer sky, shards of fabric fluttering amidst a chorus of screams. Below, the French countryside seemed to rush up to meet us, a green blur promising oblivion. My grip on the shattered cockpit rim was desperate, but futile. Henry's cry, choked with terror, was the last sound I registered before the world dissolved into a kaleidoscope of splintered wood, deafening wind, and an agonizing, wrenching crash.

News of Rex's demise swept through Britain like a wildfire. The man I'd begrudged his arrogance, his thirst for foreign accolades, was suddenly elevated to the pantheon of war heroes. My own grief was laced with a morbid sense of validation. He was gone, forever enshrined in national memory as the Zeppelin slayer, not the braggart I'd known.

I sat down to write, not a scathing exposé, but a eulogy. My pen scratched across the paper, painting a portrait of the young pilot – his audacity, his brilliance, his fatal flaw. I wrote of his unwavering courage, the fearlessness that propelled him into the jaws of death, not once, but twice. I wrote of the night he brought down the Zeppelin, a lone hawk against a leviathan, and the roar of the nation that had hailed him as their saviour.

And as I wrote, my resentment dwindled, replaced by a grudging admiration. Rex Warneford, the arrogant braggart, was gone. In his place stood a symbol – a symbol of youthful bravado, of audacious risk-taking, of triumph and tragedy intertwined.

When his hometown unveiled the Reginald Warneford School, a wave of bittersweet emotion washed over me. The boy who craved notoriety had been immortalized, not for his boastful pronouncements, but for his indomitable spirit and the mark he left on the war-torn sky. Rex's legacy,

like the wreckage of his plane, lay scattered across the earth, a testament to a life lived at breakneck speed, a life extinguished in a heartbeat. He was gone, but in the echo of his roar, a lesson remained – a stark reminder that the sky could offer both glory and oblivion, and sometimes, the line between them was thinner than a wing.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Developing a Complex Character Through Internal Conflict and Shifting Perspectives:

- **Internal Conflict:** The narrator's initial resentment towards Rex and the later realization of his bravery showcase a transformation in their perception.
- **Shifting Perspective:** The story moves from the initial action scene showcasing Rex's recklessness to the narrator writing a eulogy, highlighting a more nuanced view of Rex's character.

2. Creating Emotional Depth Through Vivid Descriptions, Figurative Language, and Contrasting Emotions:

- **Vivid Descriptions:** Phrases like "kaleidoscope of splintered wood," "deafening wind," and "bittersweet emotion" create strong sensory experiences for the reader.
- **Figurative Language:** The simile "like a ragdoll" and the metaphor "a lone hawk against a leviathan" add depth and visual impact to the descriptions.
- **Contrasting Emotions:** The story portrays a mix of grief, resentment, admiration, and bittersweet feelings, making the characters and their relationships feel more real.

3. Exploring Symbolism:

- **Symbolism:** The wreckage of the plane becomes a symbol of Rex's life – short, intense, and forever imprinted on the memory of the war.

ChatGPT

The sun cast a golden hue over the serene landscape of Rex's hometown as the community gathered for the inauguration of the new school. A large plaque reading "Warneford School" shimmered in the afternoon light, a permanent testament to a local hero's legacy. Parents, children, and dignitaries filled the grounds, their hushed whispers and solemn faces reflecting the weight of the occasion.

As the ceremony commenced, the British journalist, standing amidst the crowd, felt a pang of irony. He remembered Rex's vibrant spirit, his audacity, and his insatiable desire for fame. While the journalist had once been irked by Rex's arrogance, he now recognized the genuine valour that had defined the young pilot's life. Despite his flaws, Rex had demonstrated unparalleled bravery in the skies, thwarting enemy plans and safeguarding countless lives.

A local official took the stage, recounting tales of Rex's heroics and emphasizing the importance of courage, sacrifice, and community. The crowd listened intently, their hearts heavy with gratitude and sorrow. As the official concluded, a moment of silence enveloped the gathering, a poignant tribute to a fallen son cherished by all.

In that solemn silence, memories of Rex Warneford—his daring escapades, his infectious enthusiasm, and his ultimate sacrifice—echoed through the hearts and minds of those present. Though his life had ended abruptly, the indelible mark he left on his community and country would endure for generations to come.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting its final rays upon Warneford School, the crowd stood united in remembrance. Amidst the sorrow, there existed a profound sense of pride—a recognition that Rex's legacy would forever inspire future generations to pursue their dreams with unwavering determination and valour.

2 things students can learn from this:

1. Evoking Emotion Through Setting, Description, and Figurative Language:

- **Setting the Mood:** The use of phrases like "golden hue," "serene landscape," and "solemn faces" creates a respectful and sombre atmosphere for the ceremony.
- **Vivid Descriptions:** Details like the "shimmering plaque" and the "hushed whispers" paint a clear picture of the scene and contribute to the emotional impact.
- **Figurative Language:** Metaphors like "hearts heavy with gratitude" metaphorically convey the complex emotions of the crowd.

2. Creating Contrast and Complexity Through Character Development and Shifting Perspectives:

- **Contrasting Personalities:** The journalist's initial annoyance with Rex is contrasted with his later recognition of Rex's bravery, showcasing a more nuanced portrayal of both characters.
- **Shifting Perspectives:** The story moves between the journalist's memories and the public ceremony, offering a broader view of Rex's legacy.

Mr Salles Start With Some History

Almost every book written about The Great War, all the fiction and memoir, was written in 1929 and 1930. It was as though the horrors of the Depression fuelled the memories and the pens of those young men who had lived through the horrors of the war, to write, to lay their ghosts. For those men never spoke of it. The horrors of the trenches were a national secret, until the Depression brought a flood of memory which was abruptly dammed two years later. The books still existed, but the tongues of a generation were silent.

My grandfather was one of them. He was a reporter for the Times, a propaganda machine, as he once called it, publishing patriotic stories in full support of the war effort, never questioning the enormous sacrifice of young men.

When I moved to secondary school, my grandfather walked me to the gates. This was fifty years later, in the seventies. Flower power and flares, after acid but before the Sex Pistols. Black and white television, but I remember it all in technicolour. I was excited and nervous, and puzzled that it was he, and not my mother making this first journey with me.

‘Today,’ he said to me, ‘is your first step to becoming a man.’ This is what he taught me.

My school, the Rex Warneford School, was named after a real war hero. The story of Rex, my grandfather told me, would teach me what it means to be a man.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Using Context and Historical Details to Create a Deeper Setting:

- **Historical Context:** The mention of the Great War, the Depression, and specific years (1929-1930) grounds the story in

a specific historical period and helps the reader understand the characters' experiences.

- **Social Commentary:** The detail about the war being a "national secret" and the contrasting social movements of the 1970s adds depth to the setting and the characters' struggles.

2. Building Intrigue Through Foreshadowing and Unrevealed Secrets:

- **Foreshadowing:** The silence of the war generation and the grandfather's past as a war reporter hint at a deeper story about the war and its impact.
- **Unrevealed Secrets:** The mystery surrounding Rex Warneford, the war hero, piques the reader's curiosity and makes them want to learn more about him.

3. Exploring Complex Relationships Through Character Interactions and Dialogue:

- **Complex Relationship:** The detail about the grandfather, a war reporter who wrote propaganda, not about the war's horrors, creates tension and raises questions about his past.

22. A CLOSE SHAVE

There were gods of the wind, and gods of the sun and moon, gods of the harvest and gods of the stars. Fertility gods, and gods of fate. 100 gods, one for each of Avebury's 100 stones.

The pagan gods were furious. Christians in Avebury in 1350 were busy attacking the stone circle, praying to their god and cursing the old gods, the old ways, the generations who had lived here for thousands of years, and the gods who had prospered for thousands of years, long before Jesus.

The villagers were digging at the stone's bases. 12 stones to represent the 12 disciples. The Christians prayed and sang and feasted and dug.

By far the loudest was the travelling barber. He sang with the loudest voice. He spoke most persuasively as he cut the wives' hair, softly pointing out the sacrilege of the stones surrounding the church. He spoke loudest to the men as he trimmed their beards, painting the pagans as dangerous enemies, and the stones as obstacles to good farming and the plough.

The barber had arrived on the first of January, and it had taken till Easter to work the village into a frenzy of zeal and action. The day that Jesus rose would be the day that the stones fell. The day that the stone was rolled from Christ's tomb so that he rose again would be the day the stones were toppled and buried in Avebury.

The barber hacked at the trickster God's stone – the Vikings called him Loki, and before them the Celts called him Lugh, but his real name was lost in time. He drank his wine and laughed while the barber led the digging, deeper and deeper, while the congregation pushed the stone back and forth, like loosening a giant tooth. And then the barber made the final cut, his pick axe dislodging a stone at the base, and the giant stone began to fall. The barber ran for edge of his hole, and scrabbled at the sides. He would look back on this as a close shave. But the scissors in his pocket stabbed him in the side. No harm done, really. An inch of stabbing, painful but survivable. But just enough to make him cry out and pause. And he looked back, as the stone fell on him, crushing him down into the earth.

900 years later the archaeologists raised the stones and placed his body in the British Museum.

How to Start the Story

1. In media res, with the pagan gods arguing
2. In flashback, with the barber, persuading customers to attack the stones
3. With (make up a name), the god of mischief looking at the barber's skeleton in the British museum, telling the story in flashback
4. A visitor to Avebury presses their hands on the stone in a storm/ at dawn/ on the solstice/ and has a sudden vision of what happened
5. The barber, watching the stone fall, and his past flashing before his mind's eye

How to End the Story

1. The barber, as a cautionary tale or pathetic figure displayed in the British Museum
2. The god of mischief watching the stone crush the barber

3. The barber's perspective, as the stone falls
4. The archaeologist carefully uncovers the barber's scissors or skull, or perhaps his hand crushed against his skull, revealing he had tried to ward off the falling stone.

5 Act Summary

1. Avebury had 100 stones, each representing a pagan god, including gods of wind, sun, moon, harvest, stars, fertility, and fate.
2. In 1350, Christian villagers in Avebury aimed to dismantle the stone circle, viewing it as a threat to their faith, and connected each stone to the 12 disciples.
3. A persuasive travelling barber stirred the villagers into action over months, emphasizing the stones' pagan origins and the need to remove them.
4. As the villagers worked to topple a significant stone, the barber's overconfidence led to his demise when the falling stone crushed him after a minor injury.
5. Centuries later, archaeologists unearthed the stones and discovered the barber's remains, placing them in the British Museum.

Gemini

Write the beginning of this story in media res, with the pagan gods arguing.

A guttural roar echoed through the ancient stones, the earth trembling with its fury. "Loki's beard!" boomed Grannos, the Sun God, his golden locks ablaze with righteous anger. He paced through the circle, casting long, flickering shadows on the moss-covered monoliths. "They chip and gnaw at our bones, these pale worms who whisper of a single, jealous sky-tyrant!"

Cernunnos, the Horned God, snorted, a rumbling tremor running through his massive stag form. "Aye, and their zealous barber yaps like a mangy fox, poisoning the minds of mortals with his craven hymns and promises of a bearded ghost!" He pawed the ground, casting emerald sparks from his antlers.

But Danu, the Earth Mother, remained seated, her obsidian eyes reflecting the moon's cold gaze. "Their fervour is a fleeting storm, my brothers," she said, her voice a slow, deep hum. "They worship stones in their places of prayer, just as we do here. Do they not also seek life, bounty, and solace from the heavens?"

"Their god demands blood! Sacrifice!" Grannos spat, his flames flaring dangerously. "They desecrate our altars, tear down our homes, and call it holy work!"

Danu turned her moonlit gaze upon him. "Their god demands obedience, but ours craves respect. We offer, they take. We whisper, they shout. Does their thunder have the melody of a summer rain, or the wisdom of an ancient oak?"

Cernunnos grunted, the tension easing from his muscles. "She speaks truth, brother. Our power lies not in brute force, but in the silent pulse of the land, the whispered magic of the wind in the blades."

A flicker of amusement lit Grannos' eyes. "So be it. They may topple stones, but can they extinguish the sun? Can they silence the moon's gentle lullaby? Let them build their churches upon our bones, for the earth remembers what lies beneath. And perhaps," he added, a mischievous glint in his eye, "we can offer them a little... encouragement in their endeavours."

A low, rumbling chuckle rolled through the circle as the gods, united once more, turned their gaze back to the village huddled amidst the stones. The mortals might have the fervour, but the gods held the wisdom, the magic, and the long, patient memory of the earth. This battle, they knew, had only just begun.

2 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating Compelling Characters Through Dialogue and Action:

- **Distinct Personalities:** The dialogue showcases the contrasting personalities of the gods: Grannos' hot-headedness, Cernunnos' groundedness, and Danu's wisdom.
- **Vivid Actions:** Descriptions like "paced," "snorted," "paw the ground," and "flames flaring" add a sense of dynamism to the scene and reveal the characters' emotions.

2. Building Tension and Conflict Through Stakes, Opposing Forces, and Figurative Language:

- **High Stakes:** The gods debate the threat posed by the newly arrived mortals, creating tension around the future of their power and way of life.
- **Opposing Forces:** The gods represent the old ways of nature worship, while the mortals represent a new, monotheistic religion, creating a clear conflict.

- **Figurative Language:** Phrases like "jealous sky-tyrant" and "mangy fox" create vivid imagery and emphasize the animosity between the two sides.

ChatGPT

Amidst the rolling mists and ancient stones of Avebury, a cacophony of voices echoed through the air. The pagan gods, each bound to a stone, were in a heated debate, their energies shimmering with intensity.

"Enough of this intrusion!" boomed the god of the wind, his voice swirling like a tempest. "These interlopers dare to challenge our dominion?"

Beside him, the goddess of the harvest rustled her energies like golden grain, murmuring, "They do not understand the balance of nature. With each stone they uproot, they disturb the very essence of the earth."

A sultry laughter emerged from the stone representing the goddess of the moon and stars. "Their ignorance blinds them more than the darkest night. Do they not know that we have watched over this land for millennia?"

From a distant stone, where the god of fate resided, a deep, resonating voice intoned, "Their actions are but threads in the tapestry of destiny. Yet, we must decide if their thread will weave into our story or break it."

Suddenly, a thunderous voice, belonging to the fertility god, shook the ground. "The energies of this land are waning! Each blow to our sacred stones weakens us. We must act!"

As the gods argued and strategized, a group of villagers, spurred on by the persuasive words of the travelling barber, approached with tools in hand, intent on severing the bond between the stones and their ancient deities. The battle for Avebury's soul had begun.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Creating a Vivid Setting and Atmosphere Through Description and Sensory Details:

- **Descriptive Language:** Phrases like "rolling mists," "ancient stones," and "shimmering with intensity" create a clear picture of the mystical setting of Avebury.
- **Sensory Details:** The use of sound ("cacophony of voices"), sight ("golden grain"), and touch ("shook the ground") immerses the reader in the scene and heightens the atmosphere.

2. Introducing Compelling Characters with Distinct Voices and Roles:

- **Distinct Voices:** Each god's speech pattern reflects their personality: the wind god's booming voice, the harvest goddess's murmuring, the moon goddess's sultry laughter, and the god of fate's resonating pronouncement.
- **Clear Roles:** The gods represent different aspects of nature (wind, harvest, moon, fate, fertility), establishing their connection to the land and their stake in the conflict.

3. Building Conflict and Stakes Through Dialogue and Opposing Forces:

- **Dialogue:** The dialogue showcases the gods' differing opinions on how to handle the mortals' intrusion, creating tension and internal conflict.
- **Opposing Forces:** The gods represent the old ways and the balance of nature, while the mortals, led by the barber, represent change and a new belief system, creating a clear external conflict.
- **High Stakes:** The gods' weakening energies and the villagers' intent to sever the connection to the stones establish high

stakes for both sides, making the reader invested in the outcome.

Mr Salles: Start With the Crisis

God had come to him, Eric the barber, in his dreams. He had crossed the Salisbury plain, stopping in villages, cutting hair and beards, his blades kept sharp as his mind, and God had found him. Sleeping. God was filled with righteous rage, and Eric understood that feeling, bound as he was to a trade which offered no glory and little chance of riches.

The stones must be destroyed, God told him. Eric awoke, damp and shaken from his sleep in the forest, God's anger urging him on. He had turned back towards Stonehenge, but God's voice grew silent, crows cawed at him, and a murder of them swooped low, like hawks and speared towards him.

Splaying himself on the dirt, he listened to the earth for God's whisper. Avebury, it said. And so it was that Eric turned eastwards and walked the ancient ways to Avebury. Now the sun shone every step, and the blue sky embraced him in its bosom, and strangers fell into stride next to him, shared bread and apples, and paid him for his finest cuts and trims. The countryside opened to him, and he stepped towards Avebury as the Templar Knights must have stepped into Jerusalem, pious, exhausted, yet exultant.

He passed the long barrows, and Silbury Hill, and came upon the giant ditch at Avebury, armed with God's righteous wrath.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building a Compelling Protagonist Through Internal Conflict, Motivation, and Transformation:

- **Internal Conflict:** Eric grapples with his mundane life as a barber and the newfound purpose God has bestowed upon him.

- **Motivation:** God's message ignites a desire in Eric to break free from his ordinary life and fulfil a higher purpose.
- **Transformation:** Eric's journey from a weary barber to a determined follower of God's will showcases a character arc.

2. Creating a Sense of Mystery and Intrigue Through Foreshadowing and Unrevealed Information:

- **Foreshadowing:** The crows attacking Eric after God's voice fades hints at potential dangers or challenges on his journey.
- **Unrevealed Information:** The nature of God's anger and the details of Eric's life before the dream remain a mystery, piquing the reader's curiosity.

3. Using Setting and Figurative Language to Evoke Atmosphere:

- **Setting:** The contrasting descriptions of the dark forest and the sunny, welcoming countryside highlight Eric's internal struggle and changing circumstances.
- **Figurative Language:** The comparison of Eric's journey to the Templar Knights entering Jerusalem evokes a sense of piety, historical significance, and determination.

23. EILMER THE FLYING MONK

Eilmer was a monk and a dreamer. He knew his classic myths, and he believed Daedalus might actually have flown. He didn't believe in wings made of wax. But he thought silk might work. He built wings which stretched from his wrists to his ankles. The other monks humoured him. Eilmer was always inventing something. His greenhouse was like the Garden of Eden. But flying? Dream on Eilmer.

'There will be a sign from God,' said Eilmer. And sure enough, there was. A comet, Halley's comet, streaked across the sky with a blazing tail.

And so, Eilmer put on his suit of silk. His wings stretched from his wrists to his ankles. He looked more like a bat than an angel. He gave a rousing speech and the Abbot prayed for him. Then, all the monks gathered beneath Malmesbury Abbey's tallest tower. They kissed him. They commended his soul to heaven. They lifted up their eyes.

Eilmer jumped. Or rather he launched. He sprang forward and spread his arms and legs. He jumped from the tower of the abbey, and streaked like a comet.

But then, instead of gliding smoothly, he began to spin. He flapped, and flailed, and righted himself, and spun again. Yet he flew 200 meters before spinning and crash-landing in a field.

He broke both his legs, and though the right one healed well, the left was never straight. He walked with a stick and a limp. But this was a small sacrifice to be the first man to fly and live. He was a miracle.

He knew he had been lucky. Because the sign of God, the blazing comet, well, that had had a tail. He understood that, like every bird, all he had needed was a tail. He could fly better next time. But his brother monks knew that one miracle was enough.

One by one, the other monks died off, replaced by new men, who treated Eilmer's flight as a legend, or a myth. But he did live to see Halley's comet return 75 years later in 1066. Some say he put on his silk flying suit once more, with a new tail stretched over a frame of cane. And, they say, he flew once more from the top of the tower.

And that, so they say, was the last anyone ever saw of Eilmer.

How to Start the Story

1. The voice of God, telling Eilmer he can fly.
2. Or flashback, Eilmer's voice as he tells of his first attempt, 75 years ago.
3. Or a witness to the final flight, where Eilmer vanishes, telling the story for future generations.
4. With prayers from the monks as they watch Eilmer prepare for his leap.

How to End the Story

1. Eilmer disappears in flight
2. Eilmer thanking God for his broken legs
3. Eilmer, aged 93, standing on top of the tower, ready to jump with his new suit and tail.

5 Act Summary

1. Eilmer's dream: Motivated by mythical figures and his own ingenuity, Eilmer believed humans could fly.
2. Construction and preparation: He built silk wings and treated his flight as a religious endeavour.
3. The first flight: Despite initial spins and a crash landing, Eilmer achieved 200 meters of flight, becoming a local legend.
4. A lesson learned: Eilmer realized the need for a tail and planned to improve his design for further attempts.
5. The legacy: He lived to see Halley's comet reappear and, according to local lore, may have flown again before disappearing mysteriously.

Gemini

Write the beginning of the story with prayers from the monks as they watch Eilmer prepare for his leap.

The wind whispered secrets through the gargoyles perched on the abbey's eaves, stirring Eilmer's hair and tugging at the edges of his makeshift wings. Below, the monks stood in a silent circle, their heads bowed in prayer. Their faces, illuminated by the pale light of dawn, were a mosaic of apprehension and hope. Brother Anselm, his beard white as the approaching sunlight, spoke the words they all silently echoed: "Lord, grant your servant the wings of faith, the courage of Icarus, and the wisdom to land, not as a fallen star, but as a blessed messenger of your boundless grace."

Eilmer rose, his eyes reflecting the fiery embers of the dying moon. He scanned the faces of his brothers, seeking solace in their silent support. He saw doubt etched on some, wonder on others, but most of all, he saw their fervent hope, a silent plea for him to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. With a deep breath, he turned his back on the rising sun and the familiar silhouette of the abbey. He closed his eyes, feeling the wind caress his face, a silent touch urging him forward. This was it. The moment he had dreamt of, prayed for, and meticulously crafted for years. This was his flight into the unknown.

He spread his wings, the silk sighing with the promise of flight. Each feather, meticulously sewn and blessed, shimmered with a faint luminescence, catching the last whispers of the dying night. It felt both impossibly light and reassuringly sturdy, an extension of his own body, a fragile bridge between his earthly confines and the vast, beckoning sky.

With a resolute nod to the silent circle below, Eilmer took a step forward, then another. The edge of the roof loomed before him, a thin line between his dream and the unforgiving earth. He paused, letting the

wind brush against his face, savouring the moment before the plunge. In the quiet before the storm, he uttered a silent prayer, not for success, but for the courage to embrace the consequences, whatever they may be.

Then, with a heart filled with hope and a mind clear as the dawn sky, Eilmer launched himself into the void. The world spun as he fell, the wind a roaring symphony in his ears. Below, the monks gasped, their prayers transforming into cries of wonder and fear. And for a fleeting moment, as the sun crested the horizon, painting the sky in hues of gold and crimson, Eilmer, the flying monk, soared like a dream made flesh.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Emotional Tension and Character Development Through Description and Internal Conflict:

- **Vivid Descriptions:** Details like "wind whispered secrets," "faces illuminated by pale light," and "wings shimmering with faint luminescence" create a vivid picture and evoke a sense of awe and anticipation.
- **Internal Conflict:** Eilmer's emotions are explored through details like "apprehension and hope" on the monks' faces and his own fear and determination.

2. Creating a Sense of Wonder and Significance Through Setting, Symbolism, and Figurative Language:

- **Setting:** The abbey setting adds a sense of history, faith, and the unknown, contrasting with the vastness of the sky.
- **Symbolism:** Eilmer's wings symbolize his ambition, faith, and the attempt to bridge the gap between humanity and the divine.

- **Figurative Language:** Metaphors like "wings of faith" and "fallen star" add depth and metaphorical meaning to Eilmer's actions.

3. Crafting a Climactic Moment with Pacing, Description, and Emotional Impact:

- **Pacing:** The slow build-up with details, prayers, and internal thoughts increases tension before the final action.
- **Descriptive Action:** The description of Eilmer's final steps, the world spinning, and the wind roaring creates a dynamic and immersive experience for the reader.
- **Emotional Impact:** The ending with Eilmer soaring like "a dream made flesh" leaves a sense of wonder and hope, even with the unknown outcome.

ChatGPT

Amidst the echoing chants and solemn prayers that filled the stone chambers of Malmesbury Abbey, a palpable tension hung in the air. Monks, young and old, lined the periphery of the grand hall, their voices rising and falling in a rhythmic cadence. Liturgical incense wafted around with an ethereal scent.

At the centre of this spiritual symphony stood Eilmer, his silhouette framed against the towering windows that cast long shadows upon the cold, stone floor. Clad in a peculiar suit of silk that shimmered in the dim candlelight, he stretched out his arms, showcasing the intricate wings that spanned from his wrists down to his ankles. Each feathered edge delicately sewn, each thread woven with dreams of soaring through the heavens.

"Lord, guide our brother Eilmer on this daring journey," intoned Abbot Alden, his voice resonating with a blend of reverence and trepidation. The weight of the moment was not lost on him or any of the brethren present.

A murmur of amens and whispered prayers rippled through the gathering, a collective plea for divine protection.

Eilmer's eyes, alight with a fervour that bordered on madness and brilliance, scanned the faces of his brothers. Some wore expressions of doubt, others masked their concern with stoic resolve, but all were united in this moment of faith and uncertainty.

With a final nod to Abbot Alden and a deep breath that seemed to draw strength from the ancient stones surrounding them, Eilmer prepared himself. The fervent prayers of the monks swelled, as together they climbed the tallest tower in the abbey.

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Building Atmosphere and Setting a Scene Through Sensory Details and Figurative Language:

- **Sensory Details:** Descriptions like "echoing chants," "solemn prayers," "ethereal scent," and "cold, stone floor" create a vivid picture of the abbey's atmosphere.
- **Figurative Language:** Metaphors like "framed against the towering windows" and "a fervour that bordered on madness and brilliance" add depth and visual impact.

2. Creating Suspense and Character Depth Through Description and Action:

- **Palpable Tension:** Phrases like "palpable tension" and "blend of reverence and trepidation" highlight the anticipation and potential danger of Eilmer's attempt.
- **Character Depth:** Eilmer's attire, his outstretched arms showcasing the wings, and his eyes filled with "fervour" reveal his determination and ambition.

3. Emphasizing the Importance of Community and Faith Through Dialogue, Details, and Character Interactions:

- **Collective Support:** The monks' chanting, prayers, and worried expressions showcase their communal support for Eilmer, despite their doubts.
- **Religious Significance:** The setting in the abbey, use of "Abbot," and "Lord" in the prayers emphasize the role of faith in Eilmer's endeavour.

- **Shared Uncertainty:** The monks' varied reactions (doubt, concern, stoicism) create a sense of shared uncertainty, highlighting the weight of the unknown outcome.

Mr Salles: Start with Flashback

Well young novices, this cell belonged to Brother Eilmer, last seen in the year of our father 1066. I was young like you then, a novice Friar, and Eilmer, well, he was close to a hundred years old, but a mind as sharp as a kitchen knife, whetted with lemon juice. He was a master of the herb garden, the green house; those glass panes, so clear and unclouded you saw in the gardens – Eilmer understood how to extract the impurities from the glass like an exorcism.

We are an Abbey full of miracles, my sons. You know well the comet which blazed the sky when King William drove across the waters and routed our Saxon armies. No one can forget 1066. But for us, that was the day of another miracle: the night the comet returned.

That night Eilmer jumped to his feet, well hobbled on his one good leg, hauled himself upright with this very oak staff I'm holding now. His eyes lit up and he instructed me to open this chest. I cannot show you what was within, as you will soon understand. It was much like a habit, but fashioned from silk. From the wrist to the ankles the silk stretched, like the wing of a bat. But also, between each leg, he had fashioned bamboo struts and silk stretched between them, like a bird's tail.

'Ah, young Herbert,' he said, grabbing my shoulder. 'You will need to assist me in this endeavour. I have been waiting some years for this very night. Lend me your strength.'

And so it was that I helped Eilmer to carry himself up the tower toward which we are climbing now. I held the folds of silk and the bamboo tail as though they were delicate bird's eggs and shuffled with Eilmer as he limped upwards. He took his time, stopping every few steps to tell me the reason for our midnight ascent.

'Three score and fifteen years have passed,' he told me, 'since this comet last visited, before the millennium. I saw it and knew it was a sign. It

streaked like Icarus, it took flight and seemed to fill the sky, and I had a sudden vision of how a man, a God fearing man, might fly. That was the night I understood I had the means, with silk, to craft a vestment, all in one piece, sewn tight to the body, that might see me fly from the tower-top to the fields, past the river. You have not heard? That is how I come to have one leg so much shorter, young Herbert.'

As we climbed and paused for breath, he told me how, 70 years ago, after the chanting of Lauds, the whole brotherhood had assembled in the courtyard below, and prayed for Eilmer. How the Abbot was persuaded to allow Eilmer to leap to his certain death, well, we shall never know, for he and all the brothers are passed now. But Eilmer could persuade the sun to stop shining and the fox to leave the henhouse: what a tongue he had.

The brothers' prayers lifted up, as though to lift Eilmer higher. He had put on his silks, and been sewn into them. The sun was rising, and the day was as still as a meditation. Young Eilmer climbed to this rampart, stood with his arms outstretched as a bird unfurls its wings, or as Jesus spans the crucifix, and took, oh my brothers, a miraculous leap of faith...

3 things students can learn from this:

1. Using Narrative Voice and Pacing to Create a Sense of Intimacy and Mystery:

- **Narrative Voice:** The use of a first-person narrator, "Friar," and his direct address ("young novices," "my sons") creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy.
- **Pacing:** The deliberate pacing with details and anecdotes about the past builds suspense and mystery around Eilmer's story.

2. Building Character Depth Through Description, Dialogue, and Action:

- **Description:** The description of Friar as a young novice then contrasts with the portrayal of Eilmer as a sharp-minded old man, highlighting the passage of time.
- **Dialogue:** Eilmer's words ("Ah, young Herbert... lend me your strength") reveal his determination and dependence on the narrator.
- **Action:** The narrator's description of carrying the silk and bamboo structure hints at the peculiarity of Eilmer's contraption.

3. Weaving Historical Context and Folklore into the Narrative to Add Depth and Significance:

- **Historical Context:** The mention of the year 1066 and King William's conquest places the story within a specific historical period.
- **Folklore:** The reference to the comet and its connection to Eilmer's vision adds a layer of mystery and folklore to the story.

WHO WRITES THE BETTER STORY?

You might have a favourite writer: Me, Gemini, ChatGPT – that’s my order of preference!

We have slightly different approaches. Here is a summary, or checklist, which you may find useful.

The first on each list is the one which came up most frequently in the 2, 3 or 5 things to learn from the writing section. So, the top 15 techniques are listed for each of us, *in order of importance*.

Mr Salles	Gemini	ChatGPT
Start by developing your characters' depth through internal monologue and backstory.	Start by creating compelling characters through vivid descriptions, their actions, and their inner thoughts.	Start by focusing on building emotional depth. Use vivid descriptions, engaging dialogue, and immersive settings to bring your characters to life.

Use description and character interactions to build suspense and foreshadowing.	Build suspense and tension by using foreshadowing, controlling pacing, and painting detailed scenes with your descriptions.	Create suspense and intrigue by weaving together setting, figurative language, and your characters' internal struggles. Use foreshadowing.
Explore themes through symbolism, adding layers of meaning to your story.	Explore themes by developing your characters, advancing the plot, and letting meaningful dialogue reveal deeper insights.	Explore themes of unconventional beauty, acceptance, and the complexities of desires through your plot and character arcs. Use symbolism.
Integrate irony and dramatic moments into action to evoke powerful emotions.	Craft emotional impact by employing vivid descriptions, figurative language, and actions.	Craft impactful moments by employing descriptive language, figurative devices, and decisive character actions.
Create a vivid setting by incor-	Develop dynamic characters through	Dive deep into your characters'

porating sensory details and figurative language.	a combination of dialogue, internal monologue, and action to make them feel authentic and multi-dimensional.	motivations and inner conflicts through detailed descriptions and introspective monologues.
Develop distinct character voices and personalities through language and tone, making your characters authentic.	Establish atmosphere and tension by appealing to the senses with detailed descriptions and using figurative language.	Develop complex characters by delving into their past through flashbacks and exploring their inner worlds through internal monologue.
Surprise your readers with unexpected and uplifting resolutions.	Keep readers intrigued by sprinkling hints of mystery through foreshadowing and suspenseful elements throughout.	Set the tone and build suspense throughout your narrative by creating a compelling atmosphere through meticulous setting descriptions, vivid imagery, and well-paced storytelling.

Build dynamic character relationships through descriptive prose and meaningful dialogue.	Inject humour and emotional depth into your story by placing characters in unexpected situations that reveal their true selves.	Develop your characters' voices and emotional depth through authentic dialogue and evocative descriptions.
Dive into complex emotions using figurative language and internal monologue to deepen your characters' emotional arcs.	Use impactful imagery and symbolism to convey themes.	Build suspense through character actions and internal struggles, while also hinting at future plot developments through foreshadowing.
Employ foreshadowing and contrast.	Set the scene effectively by creating an atmosphere that sets the tone and introduces conflicts.	Create anticipation and tension through the structure of your sentences, varying their lengths and rhythms to match the pacing of your story.
Engage your	Engage readers	Utilize shifts in

audience with a compelling narrator and captivating anecdotes from the very beginning.	by keeping them guessing with conflicts and mysteries.	perspective to deepen your characters and provide different insights into the narrative.
Explore dialogue and description, highlighting the intricacies of relationships.	Show dynamic character traits and developments rather than simply telling the reader about them.	Employ symbolism and foreshadowing to add layers of meaning and complexity to your storytelling.
Infuse your narrative with suspense using figurative language and descriptive techniques.	Surprise your audience with unexpected plot twists and turns.	Show, don't tell; allow your readers to experience the story through the actions and experiences of your characters.
Build intrigue by dropping hints and unravelling secrets gradually.	Utilize the power of nature as a backdrop or force within your story to add layers of	Introduce elements of the extraordinary through contrasts.

	meaning and intensity.	
Add depth and significance to your story by incorporating elements of historical context and folklore.	Ensure your characters grow and change over the course of the story by demonstrating their evolution through their actions and inner reflections.	Wrap up your story with a satisfying resolution that ties up loose ends while leaving room for further exploration or contemplation.

My take away from this list is about focus. Most items in my column are shorter than Gemini, which is in turn shorter than ChatGPT.

My theory is, they are trying to do too much. I write better, by focusing on less.

But, you can disagree. If you are using all the techniques in either of our lists, you know you are going to get top grades.